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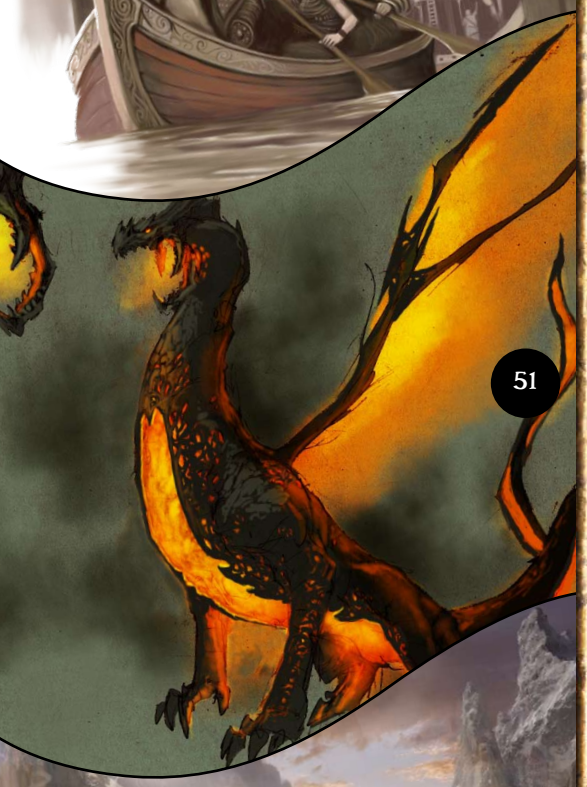

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There is no "I" in Vecna

When I first joined my Thursday Night campaign, I rolled up Staab the warforged ranger—a straightforward, polite, cooperative member of his new party. After all, as a new player, it made sense to fly under the radar.

Staab bored me to tears.

By the time we started playtesting 4th Edition, it was the perfect time to roll up Garret Farwhere, halfling warlock. Garret's personality better matched my preferred gaming style: the instigator.

In my mind, instigator is a nuanced role. It combines elements of a trickster, jester, intrepid explorer, and—at times—damsel in distress. Essentially, you're trying to maximize your own fun at the table without diminishing the fun of the other players. However, you have to walk a fine line between keeping things interesting for yourself without annoying, antagonizing, or outright jeopardizing the rest of the party. The guy who opens random doors in the middle of a fight just to see what's behind them, inevitably drawing more monsters into combat, is all three of these things. That type of behavior doesn't qualify you as an instigator—in my book, that makes you a jerk (or a Cylon).

That said, an instigator who takes the occasional random approach to a fight can sometimes elicit better results than the rest of the party might expect (think of Wicket luring off those Stormtroopers outside the shield generator). In his most famous success to date, Garret, along with his bold companions, fought within a treasure vault, the treasures stored behind a series of force fields. As the rest of the party battled the guards, Garret teleported behind the fields to see what he could take (thinking to help out the party, of course). Knowing the type of character Garret was, the DM had prepared a surprise: a "sleeping" chain golem within one of the vaults, complete with an alluring lock on its waist just waiting to be picked. Garret managed to pick the lock, but activated the golem at the same time. Without the command words, he had to teleport out of there in a hurry. But near the end of the fight, he used another power (*will of the Feywild*) to teleport the final enemy *into* the force field—and beneath the smashing fists of the golem.

Other times, marching to your own beat occasionally does mean pursuing goals that may or may not correspond with your party's. Take the *Eye of Vecna* for example. In our campaign, we were running through *Thunderspire Labyrinth*, and the Eye made an appearance. The rest of Garret's party wanted to destroy it ... but Garret desperately wanted keep for himself. He even tried to pick a fellow PC's pocket to get at it. He even made the attempt, in a stroke of metagaming genius, by using an action point to make the Thievery attempt mid-combat, so as to not look inactive for a round.

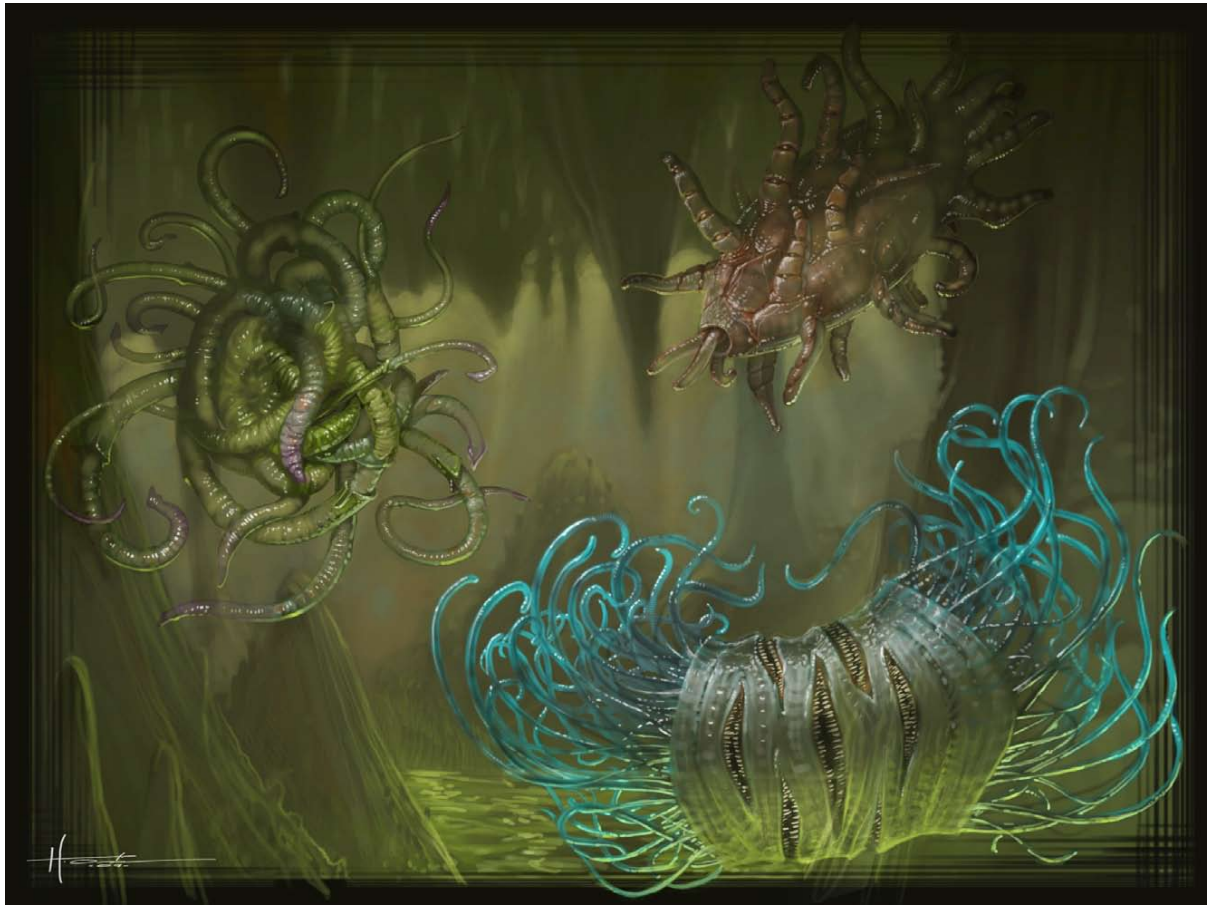
Garret never did get that eye (nor, for that matter, did he get his mitts on Moran's Eye from *King of the Trollhaunt Warrens*). But really, that was never the point. The point is that as the instigator, Garret helped move things along, without completely moving counter to the goals of his fellow party members. It's a challenging role in a cooperative group dynamic, but if it fits your style as well, I'd fully encourage you to *not* take the most strategic action every round, but think about exploring the most interesting one. I firmly believe that most DMs love it when you do. In the end, their monsters are meant to be defeated and their villains' plots unraveled. If you can help do so in a way the whole table remembers—that makes the adventure all the richer.

Creature Incarnations: Fell Taints

Mysterious and deadly, fell taints can add a new dimension to any adventure, and they make a great change of pace from the standard low-level fare of kobolds, skeletons, and giant rats. Yet in middle levels of the heroic tier they can still provide serious challenges for even seasoned adventurers.

by N. Eric Heath

Illustrations by Hector Ortiz



Description

Fell taints are beautiful, translucent orbs of wispy tendrils that flow and writhe as if in winds that aren't there. They have a subtle iridescent glossy sheen and are about 2–3 feet in diameter. Adding to their strangeness is the fact that they don't make any noise. Frequently their victims scream in agony or whimper in despair, but the fell taints themselves are completely silent no matter what they are doing at any given moment. A fell taint's victim can feel a hit from the fell taint, but the fell taint's tendrils continue to twist and flow undisturbed.

These creatures do not have mouths and do not ingest solid matter. These bizarre creatures don't even need to breathe. When fell taints feed on a victim, they do no physical damage. They consume the psychic energy of their victim. The body of a creature slain by fell taints is physically undamaged.

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Behavior

Utterly alien, a fell taint's motivations are a mystery. None show humanlike emotions, though they withdraw or flee if they are in danger. They do this not out of fear, however—they wish to survive. A group of fell taints that has an experience of near-defeat rarely voluntarily confronts those foes again. The exception is when the opponents later became vulnerable, in which case the fell taints decide to attack again. The motivation for this second attack is only the desire to feed; fell taints don't feel anger or need revenge.

Fell taints communicate with each other, though no one knows how. Because they work well together in combat, some theorize that they receive psychic emanations from others of their kind. Those fell taints that are soldiers work to prevent enemies from getting to the artillery or controllers, and they all focus on one target once the combat begins in earnest.

These creatures possess exceptional skills at evaluating potential targets. If overmatched, they withdraw as soon as possible. Though fell taints are not normally scavengers, one or more of them might follow a party of adventurers for a time, then float in to feed on the remnants of psychic energy left on the corpses of creatures defeated by the party. This likely happens if the fell taints decided that the party is too powerful to defeat. If, however, one of the party falls in combat, the taints have no basis for understanding that the rest of the party might object to them feeding on the fallen adventurer. The taints don't understand that this action could bring an end to the chain of easy meals. So, even though they feed on the emotional and psychic energy of their victims, they don't appear to understand or relate to those emotions.

Like any predator, fell taints are adept at capitalizing on their advantages. Their flying and hovering abilities make them formidable foes. They favor locations where their ground-based quarry is more vulnerable, such as areas of difficult terrain and obstacles that separate individuals from the group. These include rickety bridges, narrow ledges, or anything that needs to be climbed. Whenever possible, fell taints remain hidden and attack with surprise when their prey is vulnerable.

All fell taints with ranged attacks seek to attack from cover whenever possible. They also use any range advantage they might have. For example, in melee fell taints occupy the space 1 square above the ground, which enables it to attack all 9 squares below it. This position also helps prevent attackers from flanking the fell taint, since all the flanking positions need to be 10-15 feet above the ground. Fell taints with ranged attacks frequently have cover from columns, coffered ceilings, stalactites, or tree branches.

Fell taints are new and unknown to many players. Capitalize on the novelty. Perhaps the PCs are hired to investigate why undamaged corpses are turning up in the nearby ruins. The townsfolk could understand bodies mauled by monsters or shot full of goblin arrows. Even most poisons leave signs, such as swollen tongues or strange odors, but a couple of absolutely pristine corpses can unnerve towns. Perhaps a party member on watch keeps seeing fell taints at the edge of his or her vision, but when they rouse the party, the taint(s) withdraw. Fell taints are only partially real, and when slain they appear to vanish, leaving behind only a small trace of residue that few can find (DC 20 Search check with a –10 penalty to the check if the area is wet). The scent lingers for only a moment. This lack of a "body" could make it difficult to convince the villagers (or even one's own party) that something was in the area.

In combat, when fell taints drop an adversary, they switch to the next most dangerous enemy. Most fell taints delay trying to feed until it is relatively safe or they are in dire need of the healing provided by fell taint feeding. These twisted writhing aberrations are not weakened by a lack of food; they do not starve. Even a badly injured fell taint can go dormant, waiting indefinitely, until a safe meal becomes available.

When a fell taint is about to go dormant, it finds a high, safe ledge or nook—or even just a corner by the ceiling. Nestled among stalactites is also a favored location. Fell taints go dormant by intentionally not taking any actions for 24 hours. While dormant, they can drift with air currents unless they take care to anchor themselves to something prior to going dormant. Noticing a dormant fell taint requires a DC 30 Perception or Dungeoneering check. A dormant fell taint takes a standard action to awaken from dormancy.

Fell Taint Encounters

When running encounters with fell taints, don't forget to utilize the vertical space. Fell taints live their entire lives in the air—they hover without effort, and thus, they naturally capitalize on every advantage their flight ability provides. Attacking from above is a common tactic, especially for fell taints with ranged attacks.

Use fell taints with caution: A party that has neglected its ranged attacks or has just run low on ammunition could be wiped out by just a couple of

fell taint pulsars. Having an option for the characters to withdraw to a place of safety, or at least a room with low ceilings, might be wise.

Given the types of fell taints provided thus far, they have a wide variety of uses in an adventure or campaign. Add one or two to the bottom of a pit trap or along a rickety rope bridge. In some remote areas the boundary with the Far Realm might be so thin that fell taints move back and forth with ease. In such an area a group of taints might appear in the middle of the party and begin attacking. Or perhaps fell taints are lurking just at the edge of visual range. They are ready to seize any opportunity to feed.

Also, these creatures can be a great addition to an encounter with other creatures. Fell taints can't feed on undead, oozes, constructs, and similar lifeless or emotionless creatures, so they are more likely to be encountered alongside them. However, because they don't understand or cooperate with other types of creatures, they might lurk nearby in the hopes of an easy meal.

Any fell taints in the area of a combat or similar commotion rapidly move to investigate, hoping to find an easy meal. Fell taints aren't picky—they enter combat by attacking either or both sides. In this way, they might unintentionally aid the party. Frequently the taints attack the most injured combatants, regardless of which side(s) they are on, possibly even attacking the wounded on both sides at the same time.

Since most creatures attack only active combatants, it is occasionally advantageous for players to leave a fallen member of the party unconscious for a round or two during combat. This enables the party to continue to use their actions for attacks and makes it less likely that a newly revived character is targeted while having only a few hit points. This practice could have tragic consequences if fell taints are nearby.

Fell Taint Darter

Fell taint darters dive in and out of combat using their *mind slam* to leave their enemies reeling.

Fell Taint Darter **Level 1 Skirmisher**
Small aberrant magical beast XP 100
Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +7
HP 17; **Bloodied** 8
AC 13; **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12
Resist insubstantial; **Vulnerable** 5 psychic
Speed 1, fly 8 (hover)
⊕ **Tendril Caress** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
+4 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 psychic damage.
† **Mind Slam** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
+4 vs. Will; 1d4 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is knocked prone. The fell taint darter must move at least 2 squares before using this attack, and it can continue moving its fly speed after the attack.
Darter's Dodge
The fell taint darter has +4 to AC vs. opportunity attacks.
Fell Taint Feeding (standard; at-will) ✦ **Healing**
Targets a helpless or unconscious creature; the fell taint darter loses insubstantial and its fly speed until the end of its next turn, and it makes a coup de grace against the target. If the darter kills the target, it regains all of its hit points.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 11 (+0) **Dex** 16 (+3) **Wis** 12 (+1)
Con 13 (+1) **Int** 4 (-3) **Cha** 10 (+0)

Fell Taint Darter Tactics

By using *mind slam*, a fell taint darter is adept at knocking flying targets out of the air as well as causing creatures in precarious situations to fall. A darter is also adept at positioning itself.

Fell Taint Drone

Fell taint drones follow other fell taints and attack whatever they do. The drones are immature fell taints that haven't finished developing yet. They are more animalistic than most other fell taints. Drones try to feed on any available target as soon as possible despite the risks. They are more likely to continue attacking when more advanced fell taints withdraw.

Fell Taint Drone **Level 1 Minion Lurker**
Small aberrant magical beast XP 25
Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +6
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion; see *incorporeal form*
AC 15; **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12
Resist insubstantial
Speed 1, fly 8 (hover)
⊕ **Tendril Caress** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
+5 vs. Reflex; 5 psychic damage.
Incorporeal Form (encounter)
The first time in an encounter that a fell taint drone would take damage, roll d20, on a 10+, the fell taint drone takes no damage.
Drone Feeding (standard; at-will)
Targets a helpless or unconscious creature; the target takes 5 psychic damage and the fell taint drone gains 10 temporary hit points.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 11 (+0) **Dex** 12 (+1) **Wis** 16 (+3)
Con 13 (+1) **Int** 4 (-3) **Cha** 10 (+0)

Fell Taint Drone Tactics

Left to its own devices, a fell taint drone gangs up on a target and then tries to feed on any potential victim as soon as possible. Under the direction of more advanced fell taints, the drone can add significantly to the danger of an encounter. Lashers and rippers use a drone to gain flanking, while wisps and darters direct one to interfere with any pursuers.

Fell Taint Defiant

Fell taint defiants are shrewd psychic warriors, who confuse and distract their enemies. Tough and elusive, these fell taints draw attacks away from their more vulnerable allies while also disrupting the actions of their enemies.

Fell Taint Defiant **Level 3 Soldier**
Small aberrant magical beast XP 150
Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +8
Disorientation aura 1; each enemy within the aura has a –4 penalty to all attack rolls against creatures other than a fell taint defiant.
HP 32; **Bloodied** 16
AC 17; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 16
Resist insubstantial; **Vulnerable** 5 psychic
Speed 1, fly 6 (hover)
⊕ **Tendril Caress** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
+8 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 3 psychic damage.
Tendrils of Power (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Psychic**
Close burst 1, +8 vs. Reflex; 2d6 +3 psychic damage, and the target is knocked prone.
Fell Taint Feeding (standard; at-will) ✦ **Healing**
Targets a helpless or unconscious creature; the fell taint defiant loses insubstantial and its fly speed until the end of its next turn, and it makes a coup de grace against the target. If the defiant kills the target, it regains all of its hit points.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 11 (+1) **Dex** 13 (+2) **Wis** 16 (+4)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 4 (-2) **Cha** 10 (+1)

Fell Taint Defiant Tactics

A fell taint defiant positions itself in the middle of its enemies and keeps them locked down with *disorientation* and *tendrils of power* so that its fell taint allies can use their ranged attacks.

Fell Taint Ripper

This powerful fell taint rips into the psyche of its victims and leaves pain and death in its wake. It is among the most reckless and aggressive of all the fell taints.

Fell Taint Ripper **Level 4 Brute**
Small aberrant magical beast XP 175
Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +6
HP 46; **Bloodied** 23
AC 13; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 12, **Will** 16
Resist insubstantial; **Vulnerable** 5 psychic
Speed 1, fly 6 (hover)
⊕ **Tendrils of Pain** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
+3 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 3 psychic damage.
Tendrils of Misery
Each time the fell taint ripper hits with an attack, it deals a cumulative +1d6 extra damage with successive attacks. When it misses with an attack, it loses this damage bonus.
Fell Taint Feeding (standard; at-will) ✦ **Healing**
Targets a helpless or unconscious creature; the fell taint ripper loses insubstantial and its fly speed until the end of its next turn, and it makes a coup de grace against the target. If the ripper kills the target, it regains all of its hit points.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 11 (+2) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 4 (-1) **Cha** 10 (+2)

Fell Taint Ripper Tactics

A fell taint ripper charges a vulnerable enemy, hoping to quickly ramp up its damage by using *tendrils of misery*. More than other taints, this fell taint tries to gain flanking or combat advantage whenever possible, even if it means being flanked. The ripper is the most aggressive and reckless of all the fell taints and fights to the death.

Fell Taint Thought Scourge

Fell taint thought scourges dish out terrible amounts of pain and despair, plus they sow discord among their opponents.

Fell Taint Thought Scourge Level 5 Solo Controller
Medium aberrant magical beast XP 1,000

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +8
HP 173; **Bloodied** 86
AC 23; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 22
Resist insubstantial; **Vulnerable** 5 psychic
Saving Throws +5
Speed 1, fly 6 (hover)
Action Points 2

⊕ **Tendrils of Despair** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Reach 2; +8 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 2 psychic damage.

Spreading Despair (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Reach 2; +8 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 2 psychic damage. The target can choose to reduce the damage by 5 by dealing 2d6 damage to an ally within 5 squares.

Seeds of Despair (minor; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Psychic**
Close blast 3; +8 vs. Will; at the start of each of the target's turns, the target deals 5 psychic damage to adjacent allies (save ends).

Seeds of Discord (immediate reaction, when an enemy misses the thought scourge with a melee or ranged attack; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Reach 2; +8 vs. Will; slide the target 3 squares, and the target rerolls the triggering attack against a different target of the thought scourge's choosing.

Fell Taint Feeding (standard; at-will) ✦ **Healing**
Targets a helpless or unconscious creature; the fell taint thought scourge loses insubstantial and it fly speed until the end of its next turn, and it makes a coup de grace against the target. If the thought scourge kills the target, it regains hit points equal to its bloodied total.

Threatening Reach
A fell taint thought scourge can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (2 squares).

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 12 (+3) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 18 (+6)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 4 (-1) **Cha** 10 (+2)

Fell Taint Thought Scourge Tactics

A fell taint thought scourge selects the most advantageous location for the combat. Primarily this means high cover for ranged attacks and difficult terrain to slow its ground-based foes. The thought scourge uses *seeds of despair* as soon as it can affect more than one or two opponents in the area of effect. It uses *seeds of discord* to force would-be attackers to move to attack back-rank characters, or make the attacker end its turn next to a *seeds of despair* target.

Fell Taint Void Caller

Fell taint void callers are living beacons that summon other fell taints using the psychic life energy of their victims. Void callers themselves are not the most dangerous of combatants, but they are found with other fell taints.

Fell Taint Void Caller Tactics

The fell taint void caller opens combat by summoning another fell taint using *fell taint calling*. It uses its minor action attack to slow enemies, keeping them all in range of its aura. It uses *drone calling* every round, but once bloodied, it avoids using drone calling if doing so results in damage beyond its temporary hit points. Most void callers save their second use of *fell taint calling* until they are at single-digit hit points, destroying themselves as they spawn a new fell taint.

Fell Taint Void Caller	Level 6 Elite Controller
Small aberrant magical beast	XP 450

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +10
Tainted Zone aura 5; the fell taint void caller gains temporary hit points equal to twice the number of enemies within the aura at the start of its turn.
HP 99; **Bloodied** 54
AC 19; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19
Resist insubstantial; **Vulnerable** 5 psychic
Saving Throws +2
Speed 1, fly 6 (hover)
Action Points 1

⊕ **Tendrils of Despair** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
+10 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 3 psychic damage, and the target is slowed until the end of his or her next turn. If the target was already slowed, it becomes dazed instead.

⸸ **Tendrils of Terror** (minor; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
+10 vs. Reflex; 5 psychic damage and the target is slowed until the end of his or her next turn.

Drone Calling (standard; at-will) ✦ **Summoning**
The fell taint void caller takes 5 damage (ignoring insubstantial) and summons a fell taint drone in an adjacent square. The summoned creature takes its turn after the void caller, and it acts on the void caller's initiative count.

Fell Taint Calling (standard; recharge when first bloodied) ✦ **Summoning**
The fell taint void caller takes 20 damage (ignoring insubstantial) and summons a fell taint of level 4 or lower in an adjacent square. The summoned creature takes its turn after the void caller, and it acts on the void caller's initiative count.

Fell Taint Feeding (standard; at-will) ✦ **Healing**
Targets a helpless or unconscious creature; the fell taint void caller loses insubstantial and it fly speed until the end of its next turn, and it makes a coup de grace against the target. If the void caller kills the target, it regains hit points equal to its bloodied total.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Str 12 (+4)	**Dex** 14 (+5)	**Wis** 19 (+7)
Con 15 (+5)	**Int** 8 (+2)	**Cha** 10 (+3)

Fell Taint Wisp

This fell taint dissolves into a mist that makes other fell taints stronger, then it reforms and attacks before becoming visible.

Fell Taint Wisp	Level 2 Lurker Leader
Small aberrant magical beast	XP 125

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +8
Aura of Thought Eating aura 5; a fell taint within the aura has a +2 bonus to all defenses.
HP 22; **Bloodied** 11
AC 14; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 14
Resist insubstantial; **Vulnerable** 5 psychic
Speed 1, fly 6 (hover)

⊕ **Tendril Caress** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
+5 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 psychic damage.

⊗ **Tendril Flick** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 10; +5 vs. Reflex; 1d4 + 3 psychic damage.

Combat Advantage
A fell taint wisp deals 1d6 extra damage to any target granting combat advantage to it.

Coalesce (minor, recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Healing**
Until the end of its next turn, the fell taint wisp loses insubstantial but whenever an enemy hits the fell taint wisp, that enemy takes 5 psychic damage and all fell taints within 5 squares of it regain 5 hit points.

Fell Taint Feeding (standard; at-will) ✦ **Healing**
Targets a helpless or unconscious creature; the fell taint wisp loses insubstantial and its fly speed until the end of its next turn, and it makes a coup de grace against the target. If the wisp kills the target, it regains all of its hit points.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Str 11 (+0)	**Dex** 12 (+2)	**Wis** 16 (+4)
Con 14 (+3)	**Int** 4 (-2)	**Cha** 10 (+1)

Fell Taint Wisp Tactics

A fell taint wisp starts by using *tendril flick*, then coalesces on the next round.

About the Author

N. Eric Heath has been making up stories, creatures, and worlds for decades. Though Eric keeps his stuff in Seattle, he is more likely to be found in various fantasy realms. His credits include *Monster Manual II* and the forthcoming *Underdark* supplement.

Demonomicon of Iggwilv

Turaglas, the Ebon Maw

by Ari Marmell
illustrations by Concept Art House

"Lo, here I stand upon Abyssal verge, bottomless vast that would all things consume. Batten it upon all life, all light, all souls, still never be it slaked. An eternal hunger that can never die, into far worlds it reaches, always seeking, ever feasting. Cry "Demon!" Cry "Devourer!" Cry "Ebon Maw!" Name it as you will, it heeds not your names. He needs only you, and yours, and all your world. Eternal hunger that can never die, never be it slaked. For it is the Abyss, and it is he, and all that is, is naught but its provender.

~ from the (often incoherent) writings of Ugretheon, First Among Keepers

Turaglas arose from the afterbirth of the Abyss itself. It was not among the very first; these were Demogorgon, Orcus, Yeenoghu, and others who had been counted amongst the mighty primordials until the chaos of the Abyss twisted and warped them into something *other*. Thus were they as the Abyss itself: twisted reflections of what once had been.

But then the Abyss began to vomit forth foul demons that germinated in its own putrid depths, not corruptions of existing beings but entirely new horrors. Some sages postulate that these demons are the hands and eyes of the Abyss itself, that they represent its own rage, its own destructive needs. They are not merely from the Abyss, but of the Abyss.

So it was with Turaglas. The Ebon Maw slouched from the primal bedlam, a being of viscous, shapeless chaos, a manifestation not of the Abyss's rage but of its eternal, unslakable hunger for all things. Only slowly, over the span of centuries, did Turaglas develop ambitions or even thought beyond feasting. Only then did it assemble its own demonic servitors and turn an eye toward expanding its demesne, though its primal urges never faded, never allowed it to focus on dreams of power to the extent that other demon lords had done.

Yet the competing demon lords saw in Turaglas a terrible threat to their own schemes, even their own existence. Turaglas was of the Abyss in a way that Demogorgon and Orcus were not, a true child of the abscess in creation's foundation. If the Abyss could spawn creatures of equal might to these twisted primordials, could it not some day, in its discordant convulsions, produce something greater? To the other demon lords, Turaglas represented a threat that even the bloodthirsty, chaotic creatures could not accept—the threat of being usurped.

In the midst of their other brutal struggles, these demon lords took the time to direct their demonic hordes against Turaglas. Though the Devourer was mighty and its own demons strong, its forces could not stand against theirs—in part because, always a slave to its ravenous nature, the Ebon Maw consumed its own servitors as often as it did those of the enemy.

Eventually, its nemeses grew too strong, and the Devourer fled before them. Did it slip through a naturally occurring conjunction between the worlds? Did it somehow answer a summons directed by some other demon? None can say, but however it managed it, Turaglas departed not merely the depths of the Abyss but the entire Elemental Chaos. While war raged below, Turaglas roamed the world of mortals, consuming all in its path.

The Feeders are Born

In the fourth year of the Devourer's rampage, rumors of the great demon's approach came to a town called Birruvol, and in their fear the people found themselves a scapegoat. His name was Ugretheon, an old and unpopular wizard. Ugretheon was lazy, cruel, vindictive, and not especially powerful, but he used what power he had to bully others.

The desperate townsfolk decided that Ugretheon had called the demon down upon them. Screaming and pleading, Ugretheon was thrown roughly down onto a headsman's block. The town's eldest woodsman approached, axe held aloft ...

It never fell. The earth shook, and the sun, sinking low on the western horizon, went black. Turaglas had come to Birruvol.

Grown massive from its multi-year feast, the Devourer stretched hundreds of yards. A pulpy, fleshy mass was the Ebon Maw, and on every available inch of flesh gnashed a fang-rimmed mouth.

Ugretheon watched in terror as the Hunger Eternal consumed the people of Birruvol. Consumed them—and left him alone. Ugretheon stood, untouched, in the center of what had once been a village.

Whatever the Devourer's reasons for sparing him—assuming it had even noticed him at all—Ugretheon interpreted the demon's actions as a deliberate rescue. He fell to his knees as Turaglas passed, prayers of supplication on his lips. Whether the Ebon Maw heard them is unknown, but Ugretheon felt himself infused with a surge of new power. Slowly, legs shaking, he rose and followed his new master into the wild.

The Burning Tongue

Less than a mile away stood a small mountain. As the Devourer passed, it manifested an enormous maw and took a bite from the mountainside.

The demon's new apostle made the resulting cave his shrine, for it resembled nothing so much as another mouth. Fangs of stone jutted from above and below. Within, a single spur of rock ignited with unholy fire. In all the centuries since, the flames upon the so-called Burning Tongue have brightened and dimmed with the fortunes of the cult and its master, but they have never gone out.

The Devourer Falls

Finally, battened upon the bodies and souls of thousands, bolstered by its mortal cultists, Turaglas determined to return to the Abyss and reclaim its place. It was, perhaps, the greatest gift the Devourer

ever gave the people of the mortal world, for had he remained, he might have obliterated all that was, in its endless hunger.

Alas for the Devourer, it underestimated the hatred its enemies bore for it.

During brief lulls in their endless wars, Demogorgon and Orcus both kept wary eyes turned upon Turaglas, watching as its power grew. And they prepared for its return.

Unimaginable as it might seem, these two greatest of demon princes briefly put their enmity aside and joined forces against the Ebon Maw. Even as Turaglas returned to Sholo-Tovoth, it was beset by a thousand times a thousand demons. Within the middle world, cultists of Orcus and monsters of Demogorgon massacred the Devourer's followers until they were no more than a few ragged cabals hiding in terror.

Then, appearing through portals that tore through Abyssal layers, Orcus and Demogorgon themselves set upon the Ebon Maw.

Against them both, even the mighty Devourer could not stand. Drawing upon the last lingering magic of its mortal cultists and its mastery over its own demesne, Turaglas attempted to banish the attacking demons from its realm or to flee once more through mystic portals, but even for this, its foes were ready. They corrupted its magic, sealing the entirety of the layer behind dimensional walls, transforming it into a planar prison from which even the Hunger Eternal could not escape.

The name of Turaglas was soon lost to the world, even if the scars of its rampage remained. The surviving Feeders passed down their lore in secret, and the Burning Tongue dimmed to a faint glow as the power of the Devourer faded from the land.

Something Stirs

Some decades ago, everything changed.

Vuren Krabath, the second child of a baroness and her warlock paramour, had always been wroth that his brother had inherited their father's arcane abilities and would soon inherit their mother's lands, while he had neither.

What Vuren did have were an unmatched intellect and burning ambition. Vuren studied wizardry, proving particularly adept at conjuration. He constantly sought the names of powerful fiends, devils, and demons from whom he could demand ever greater magics. In one ancient, age-brittle tome, he stumbled upon the name "Turaglas."

Had Vuren taken the time to delve further, he might have learned more of the being he thought to summon. Instead, arrogant and overconfident, he scribed his most powerful summoning circle on the floor and began to cast.

In the Abyssal cyst of Sholo-Tovoth, his call was heard.

Even slumbering and imprisoned, Turaglas possessed enough awareness to appear. Weakened, it manifested in the lesser form of a turagathshnee—and still proved far too powerful for Vuren's safeguards. The demon prince broke through the wards and ate its summoner. Then, as the greater part of roused from its eons-long slumber, the Hunger Eternal vanished once more from the world.

Today

The Ebon Maw slowly wakes. It cannot manifest its full strength; the shackles placed upon it are yet too strong. But its power grows.

In a mountainside unmarked on any map, the Burning Tongue blazes bright once more. The Feeders of the Ebon Maw gather and their agents skulk throughout the land, sowing discord and shedding blood.

All they do, they do in the Devourer's name. All the lives they sacrifice, all the power they gain, is channeled to their ravenous lord. It can be only a matter of time before the wards and the walls are torn wholly asunder and the Ebon Maw strides the world once more.

Turaglas and D&D

Unlike most other demon princes presented to date in the *Demonomicon of Iggwilv* series, Turaglas doesn't have a presence dating back to the early days of the game. It first appeared only a few years ago in *Dragon #312*, in an article entitled "The Ebon Maw." Unfortunately, the relatively late date of its introduction prevented it from appearing much in future projects save for a few brief mentions in *Fiendish Codex I: Hordes of the Abyss*™.

Now, as the curtain is still rising on the many myths and marvels that 4th Edition has in store, Turaglas has reappeared with a greater purpose and place in the demonic "pecking order." A grotesque embodiment of the Abyss's chaotic fury and ravening hunger, the Ebon Maw has many years of terrorizing campaign settings and PCs lying ahead of him.

Turaglas, the Ebon Maw

The Devourer, hunger of the abyss made manifest, has little interest in allowing others to do its fighting for it. It is quite content to heave its fleshy bulk into combat, lashing out with a dozen mouths, consuming all who would stand before it. Feasting, fighting, exploring—they are all the same to the Hunger Eternal.

Description

Turaglas is a horror without fixed shape, an enormous tide of viscous flesh replete with a hundred mouths of every shape and size. Its form constantly shifts and moves, and ranges from flesh-pink to sickly green to the pallid gray of a rotting corpse. Those unfortunate enough to stare into one of its gaping maws see nothing but teeth of bone and iron and an endless corridor of blood and blackened flesh.

Turaglas is listed as Gargantuan, but this scarcely begins to encompass the true size or the ever-shifting nature of the Ebon Maw. At its smallest, Turaglas occupies a space 5 squares on a side, but it can grow as large as the events of the battle or the adventure require. Other than the functional restrictions of what the DM can reasonably manage, Turaglas's space is practically limitless. Most of the time, keep it between 5 and 10 squares per side, simply for ease of use.

Turaglas also shifts size during combat, using its *expand* and *contract* powers, further simulating its semi-solid, chaotic nature. It can begin the combat at any size, but 5 or 6 squares per side is ideal.

Turaglas **Level 30 Solo Brute**
Gargantuan elemental magical beast (blind, demon, ooze) XP 155,000

Initiative +18 **Senses** Perception +24; blindsight 100, tremorsense 20
Infinite Maws aura 0; at the start of Turaglas's turn, each creature in Turaglas's space takes 10 damage and 10 acid damage and Turaglas slides it 1 square.
HP 1,128; **Bloodied** 564
AC 44; **Fortitude** 44, **Reflex** 40, **Will** 43
Immune disease, gaze; **Resist** 25 acid, 10 variable (3/encounter; see *Monster Manual*™, page 282); see also *uncontainable consciousness*
Saving Throws +5
Speed 4, climb 4 (spider climb); see also *dimensional step*
Action Points 2

Bite (standard; at-will) ✦ **Acid**
Reach 0; +35 vs. AC; 2d6 + 4 damage plus 2d6 acid damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

Caustic Spittle (standard; at-will) ✦ **Acid, Necrotic**
Ranged 20; one or two targets; +33 vs. Reflex; 2d12 + 8 acid damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

Grasping Mouths (minor; at-will) ✦ **Acid**
Reach 3; +35 vs. AC; 2d6 + 8 damage, plus 2d6 acid damage, and the target is pulled into Turaglas's space and slowed (save ends).

Forbidding Mouths (immediate interrupt, when an enemy leaves Turaglas's space; at-will)
Reach 3; targets the triggering creature; +35 vs. AC; the target is pulled into Turaglas's space.

Tide of Flesh (standard; recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞) ✦ **Acid**
Close burst 3; +33 vs. Reflex; Turaglas washes outward in a wave of flesh and then retracts; 2d12 + 15 acid damage, and the target is pulled into Turaglas's space and slowed (save ends).

Caustic Spray (standard; at-will) ✦ **Acid**
Close blast 6; +31 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 8 acid damage, plus the target is slowed (save ends).

Expand (standard; recharge ⁞⁞) ✦ **Acid**
Close burst 1; targets creatures outside Turaglas's space; +33 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 8 damage and 2d6 acid damage. *Miss:* The target can shift 1 square as a free action to avoid Turaglas as it expands. *Effect:* Turaglas grows to fill the burst. At the end of the encounter, Turaglas returns to its standard size (typically 5 squares by 5 squares).

Contract (minor; recharges when Turaglas uses expand) ✦ **Acid**
Turaglas shrinks in space by 1 square. Each creature in Turaglas's space is pulled 2 squares toward Turaglas's center. Turaglas cannot become smaller than 5 squares by 5 squares.

Bloodied Expansion (when first bloodied; encounter)
Turaglas recharges *expand* and uses it twice. Until the end of the encounter, *expand* recharges on a ⚄ or a ⁞⁞.

Sea of Flesh
Turaglas consists of gooey flesh approximately waist high in the squares it occupies. It can enter and occupy squares occupied by other creatures, and other creatures can enter and occupy squares occupied by Turaglas. Turaglas's space is difficult terrain to all creatures except Turaglas.

Uncontainable Consciousness
When Turaglas is dazed, it instead grants combat advantage to all enemies for the same duration. When Turaglas is stunned, it grants combat advantage to all enemies and is immobilized for the same duration.

Digested Essence (when a living enemy drops to 0 hit points or fewer while in Turaglas's space) ✦ **Healing**
Turaglas regains hit points equal to the triggering creature's bloodied value or gains 1 action point.

Dimensional Step (minor; recharge ⁞⁞) ✦ **Teleportation**
Turaglas teleports up to 12 squares.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Arcana +27, Athletics +31, History +27, Religion +27
Str 33 (+26) **Dex** 17 (+18) **Wis** 28 (+24)
Con 34 (+27) **Int** 24 (+22) **Cha** 24 (+22)

Turaglas Tactics

Turaglas prefers simple tactics: bite and then *engulf* everything in sight, feasting upon bodies and souls. It often focuses many bite attacks (granted by *infinite maws*) on a single target, then engulfs the slowed or immobilized foe before moving on to the next.

Many foes attempt to battle the Ebon Maw by remaining at a distance (and who can blame them?). Thus, Turaglas often saves the first use of its *dimensional step* for offensive purposes, teleporting to any

particularly dangerous enemy who refuses to close. Turaglas uses *caustic spittle* only if it can catch at least two or three targets in it, and uses *caustic spray* against targets who keep too far out of range to be *engulfed*.

Turaglas Lore

Arcana DC 15: Turaglas is one of the largest and most fearsome demon princes. An entity of ravenous hunger, it is called the Devourer, the Hunger Eternal, and the Ebon Maw. It has been known to consume everything in its path, leaving an appalling wake of destruction behind.

Arcana DC 20: In ages past, Turaglas drew the ire of both Demogorgon and Orcus; the two eternal rivals actually cooperated to lay it low. They imprisoned it in its home layer of the Abyss, creating a pocket-dimension prison in which the Ebon Maw slumbers. In recent years, however, its cult—the Feeders of the Ebon Maw—have grown active, causing some priests and augerers to fear that Turaglas stirs and that its prison grows frail.

Arcana DC 25: Unlike some demon lords, who were originally primordials, Turaglas was born wholly from the newly formed chaos of the Abyss. Just as some sages theorize that other demons embody the rage and hatred of the Abyss itself, some suggest that the Ebon Maw is the Abyss's hunger made manifest.

Enemies that Turaglas consumes rise again as deformed versions of themselves, completely in the demon prince's thrall but otherwise in control of their faculties and free of will. Such creatures have been some of Turaglas's most fearsome servants over the eons.

Arcana DC 30: With this result, the PC knows all the basics as presented in the History and Devourer's Realm sections (although the DM is encouraged to omit a few specific details if they seem like the sort of thing that wouldn't become known to even expert mortal students of the occult).

Aspect of Turaglas

Even confined behind the walls of its prison, Turaglas can respond to events in the mortal realm and to the calls of its cultists. It does so by sending an aspect, a portion of itself given a separate form.

Description

The aspect does not resemble Turaglas. Rather, it appears as a turagathshnee demon (page $$) of abnormally prodigious size and with several extra snapping, gibbering, drooling mouths over its body.

Aspect of Turaglas Tactics

The aspect prefers to fight in the thick of things, lashing out at multiple foes with various claw and bite attacks. It focuses its efforts on a single foe where possible, hoping to swiftly reduce someone to bloodied and then consume them. Under most circumstances, the aspect of Turaglas fights to the death; after all, the Ebon Maw can always create another ...

Aspect of Turaglas Lore

Arcana DC 20: This enormous demon is an aspect of Turaglas, called the Ebon Maw. Turaglas sends its aspect to the mortal world, sometimes on its own, sometimes at the behest of its followers.

Arcana DC 25: Unlike the aspects of some other demon lords or gods, Turaglas's aspect does not boast its own goals or persona; it truly is simply an extension of the Ebon Maw's will. Although it does not have

Aspect of Turaglas **Level 24 Elite Soldier**
Huge elemental humanoid (blind, demon) XP 12,100
Initiative +20 **Senses** Perception +19; blindsight 25
HP 456; **Bloodied** 228
AC 40; **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 36
Immune disease, gaze; **Resist** 20 acid, 15 variable (3/encounter; see *Monster Manual* glossary, page 282)
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8, climb 8 (spider climb)
Action Point 1

⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Acid**
Reach 3; +31 vs. AC; 1d6 + 9 damage plus 2d6 acid damage.

ǂ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
Reach 3; +29 vs. Reflex; 1d4 + 9 damage, and the target is pulled 2 squares and grabbed. The aspect has two claws, and a claw grabbing a creature is unavailable for claw attacks.

ǂ **Mauling Fury** (standard; at-will)
The aspect of Turaglas makes a bite attack and two claw attacks.

ǂ **Swallow** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Acid, Necrotic**
Targets a bloodied Huge or smaller creature grabbed by the aspect; +29 vs. Fortitude; the target is swallowed and is no longer grabbed. While swallowed, the target is restrained and takes 10 damage and 10 acid damage at the start of the aspect's turn. The swallowed creature has line of sight and line of effect only to the aspect, and no creature has line of sight or line of effect to the target. The swallowed creature can make melee and close attacks only. If the aspect dies, the target is no longer swallowed and can escape as a move action, ending that action in a square formerly occupied by the aspect.

ǂ **Intercepting Claw** (immediate reaction when a creature moves or shifts adjacent to the aspect; at-will)
The aspect of Turaglas makes a claw attack.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Athletics +25
Str 27 (+20) **Dex** 22 (+18) **Wis** 25 (+19)
Con 28 (+21) **Int** 10 (+12) **Cha** 23 (+18)

access to all the Devourer's thoughts and memories, Turaglas is aware of everything the aspect experiences, and the aspect always understands the Ebon Maw's will and desires.

Turaglas's Ambitions

At the core of everything Turaglas does, everything it schemes, is the burning need to feed. Like the Abyss itself, Turaglas seeks to consume, and consume, until nothing remains.

Yet Turaglas, almost despite itself, understands that it cannot emerge once more into the Abyss, or even into the mortal realm, and simply eat. That might work for a while, and Turaglas might do so briefly to increase its power. But if it and the Abyss are to consume *everything*, all of the primordials' and the gods' creation, it must first put itself in a position of unassailable power by defeating those who would thwart its appetite.

As it stirs in its prison, Turaglas has split its attentions. It works to reestablish control over the layer of Sholo-Tovath, to transform it once more into a base from which its ravening hoards can spill forth. On the middle world, it has begun to call together the various Feasts of the Feeders of the Ebon Maw, has set them to slaughtering innocents and consuming souls, feeding ever greater power to their Abyssal master. Turaglas may emerge, time and again, to consume bits of the world, to strengthen itself for the struggle to come—but once it is prepared, once it has grown mighty enough, it will emerge one final time to devour all that is.

Gargmanethka, Exarch of Turaglas

The Devourer does not boast many exarchs, in part because several have themselves been consumed by Turaglas in a fit of peckishness. Those it does claim as servitors, however, are beings of substantial power and repulsive mien, not unlike the Ebon Maw itself. Of these, perhaps the most potent and the most grotesque is the mutated otyugh called Gargmanethka.

Description

In general form, Gargmanethka resembles an ordinary otyugh—that is, it's essentially an enormous, toothy maw encased in a fleshy, sacklike body, complete with writhing tendrils and an equally serpentine eyestalk. It is far larger than other otyughs, however, and its tentacles are obscenely long even in comparison. Its three eyes luminesce a faint bile-green, and the drool that hangs in strings from its jaws and fat, repulsive tongue boasts a similar sickly tinge.

Gargmanethka, **Level 27 Elite Controller**
Huge natural magical beast XP 22,000

Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +21; darkvision
Demonic Stench (**Poison**) aura 4; living enemies who start their turns in the aura take 10 poison damage and are slowed until the start of their next turn.
HP 496; **Bloodied** 248
AC 41; **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 37
Immune disease
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6, swim 6; see also *tentacle dash*
Action Points 1

⊕ **Tentacle** (standard; at-will)
Reach 8; +31 vs. Reflex; 3d8 + 9 damage, and the target is grabbed. While the target is grabbed, it is also dazed.

⊕ **Filthy Bite** (standard; at will) ✦ **Disease, Poison**
Reach 2; +31 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 4 damage, plus ongoing poison 10 (save ends) and the target is exposed to slimy doom (*Dungeon Master's Guide*™, page 50).

Dual Threat (standard; at-will) ✦ **Disease, Poison**
Gargmanethka makes two *tentacle* attacks, or one tentacle attack and one *filthy bite* attack.

Reel (minor 2/round; at-will)
Targets one creature grabbed by Gargmanethka; +31 vs. Fortitude; on a hit, Gargmanethka slides the target 5 squares (but never more than 8 squares away from it). Gargmanethka can target any specific grabbed target only once per turn with this power.

Carrion Spittle (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Disease, Poison**
Close burst 5; +31 vs. Reflex; 4d10 + 9 poison damage and the target is exposed to slimy doom (*Dungeon Master's Guide*™, page 50). *Effect:* The area of the burst is difficult terrain until the end of Gargmanethka's next turn.

Tentacle Grab
Gargmanethka can grab with up to two tentacles at a time. While grabbing an enemy, it can act normally, but it can't use that tentacle for another attack. Enemies can attack the tentacle to make Gargmanethka let go of a grabbed creature; the tentacle's defenses are the same as Gargmanethka's. An attack that hits the tentacle does not harm Gargmanethka but causes it to let go and retract the tentacle.

Tentacle Dash (move; recharge ⚄ ⚄ ⚅)
Using its tentacles to haul itself along, Gargmanethka can either shift 3 squares or move 12 squares. It cannot sustain a grab in the same turn that it uses *tentacle dash*.

Spying Eye
Gargmanethka can hide beneath murky water or refuse, leaving only its eyestalk exposed. While doing so, it gains a +10 bonus to Stealth checks but is immobilized.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal
Skills Religion +24, Stealth +21 (+31 when using *spying eye*)
Str 29 (+22) **Dex** 16 (+16) **Wis** 26 (+21)
Con 24 (+20) **Int** 22 (+19) **Cha** 24 (+20)

Gargmanethka Tactics

Gargmanethka prefers to lie in wait, using *spying eye* until foes draw near, only then erupting from concealment to attack. When this is not an option, it moves swiftly into melee using *tentacle dash*.

Once engaged, Gargmanethka keeps foes at a distance, taking advantage of its obscene reach. It uses *reel* not merely to pull foes close, but also to slide them into tactically poor positions or to clump them together for a *carrion spittle* attack.

If forced to flee—something Gargmanethka usually does when reduced to fewer than 50 hit points—it uses *tentacle dash* to outrun its foes, often hiding in the first available spot once it's briefly out of sight.

Gargmanethka Lore

History DC 25: Turaglas's favored exarch is a hideous beast called Gargmanethka. It appears to be a giant otyugh with unnaturally long tentacles and a surprising degree of malevolent intelligence.

History DC 30: When not actively serving Turaglas, Gargmanethka roams the world pursuing its own alien agenda. Gargmanethka—and, according to legend, others of its mutated, Abyss-tainted bloodline—subscribe to a fanatical religious belief that, when the world has been destroyed, they will remain behind to feast eternally on the decaying carrion and other remains. Gargmanethka believes Turaglas to be the most likely means of bringing this end about, but if the tales of other, likeminded otyughs are true, they might have allied themselves with other would-be world-enders.

Minions of the Ebon Maw

From purple worms to gelatinous cubes, otyughs to alligators, undead ghouls to swarms of carnivorous insects or even disembodied jaws, everything about the layer of Sholo-Tovoth is about feeding, feeding, feeding. Most of these creatures are practically mindless, instinct and appetite given form, but if they're not smart enough to follow orders, they at least intuitively understand the needs of their master.

The so-called Fields of Consumption are also home to a vast horde of demons, but perhaps in a lesser variety than in other layers. Here, only the most violent and predatory of an already vicious race find their home, for the others are swiftly consumed by the layer's natives. The turagathshnee are most prominent, for they are the brood of Turaglas itself. In lesser numbers, barlguras, evistros, and hezrous stalk the plains, slaughtering and consuming as they please, while vrocks circle above to feed on those left behind. Most of the more potent (and more intelligent) demons, such as balors and mariliths, make their homes elsewhere and ally with other, more scheming—and, some might say, more rational—demon princes.

Turagathshnee	**Level 17 Skirmisher**
Large elemental humanoid (blind, demon)	XP 1,600

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +13; blindsight 20
HP 165; **Bloodied** 82
AC 31; **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 28
Immune gaze; **Resist** 10 acid, 10 variable (2/encounter; see *Monster Manual*, page 282)
Speed 8, climb 8 (spider climb)

Bite (standard; at-will) ✦ **Acid**
Reach 2; +22 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 damage plus 1d8 acid damage.

Claw (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +20 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 7 damage, and the target is grabbed. The turagathshnee has two claws, and a claw grabbing a creature is unavailable for claw attacks.

Caustic Spit (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Acid**
Ranged 10; +20 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 5 acid damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the turagathshnee's next turn.

Feasting Flurry (standard; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
The turagathshnee teleports 5 squares and makes a claw attack against one target within reach. It does this two more times, and then teleports 5 squares. It can carry a grabbed creature with it through all or part of this process and cannot make claw attacks if it's maintaining two grabs at once.

Swallow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Acid, Necrotic**
Targets one bloodied Large or smaller creature grabbed by the turagathshnee; +20 vs. Fortitude; the target is swallowed and is no longer grabbed. While swallowed, the target is restrained and takes 5 damage and 10 acid damage at the start of the turagathshnee's turn. The swallowed creature has line of sight and line of effect only to the turagathshnee, and no creature has line of sight or line of effect to the target. The swallowed creature can make melee and close attacks only. If the turagathshnee dies, the target is no longer swallowed and can escape as a move action, ending that action in a square formerly occupied by the turagathshnee.

Dimensional Step (move; recharge ⚁ ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Teleportation**
The turagathshnee teleports up to 8 squares and teleports each creature grabbed by it to a square within its reach.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal
Skills Athletics +20

Str 24 (+15)	**Dex** 17 (+11)	**Wis** 21 (+13)
Con 21 (+13)	**Int** 20 (+13)	**Cha** 18 (+12)

Turaglas has no long-term allies among the other Abyssal princes, for they know that its very nature would cause it to turn on them even faster than other demons and because of the innate hatred and jealousy the demon princes who were formerly primordials feel toward this first-born son of the Abyss proper. Turaglas, for its part, categorizes all other demon lords the same it way it does any other creature: those to be consumed, and those to be used and then consumed.

Short-term alliances do occur from time to time, as competing demon princes attempt to convince Turaglas to turn its forces loose on their rivals. Such concords rarely last longer than a single skirmish or battle. Graz'zt, Yeenoghu, and Juiblex ally with Turaglas most frequently. (It is oozelike Juiblex with whom Turaglas acknowledges the most commonality, but even it must eventually be devoured.)

Turagathshnee

Turagathshnees are a race of hideous, ever-hungry demons, the unintended spawn of Turaglas, even as Turaglas itself was birthed by the Abyss. They are tall, gangly humanoids, their legs, arms, and fingers longer in proportion to their torso than a human's. The middle finger on each hand is longer than the others and capped with a wicked talon. Their heads

are far taller in proportion than a human's and completely lacking in features save for a single gaping maw that extends vertically from the demon's chin to the base of its skull, allowing the entire head to split asunder as the mouth opens.

Turagathshnee Tactics

A turagathshnee moves on a target, possibly using *dimensional step* or *feasting flurry*, and immediately attempts to beat her down to bloodied so it can then swallow her. The demon uses *caustic spit* on distant foes or to keep a badly injured enemy from fleeing.

Like their master, turagathshnees know little but hunger; they normally fight to the death.

Turagathshnee Lore

Arcana DC 20: Turagathshnees are demons linked to the demon prince Turaglas. They enjoy nothing so much as consuming sentient beings.

Arcana DC 25: The gullet of a turagathshnee is partly extra-dimensional space, allowing them to swallow creatures as large as they are. Despite their inherently chaotic nature, they are unswervingly loyal to their prince. Even when summoned by mortal conjurers for unrelated tasks, they attempt to turn their actions to benefit the Devourer, always seeking a way to hasten its awakening and escape.

The Feeders of the Ebon Maw

The Feeders—a blanket term for most cultists of the Ebon Maw—are mostly human but include substantial minorities of dragonborn, dwarves, orcs, and even more brutal creatures such as ogres and trolls.

The Feeders of the Ebon Maw operate in small cells called Feasts, located throughout various towns and cities within several weeks' travel of the mountain that houses the Burning Tongue. Most Feasts have between five and 50 members, depending on the size of the surrounding community. The leader of each Feast, called a Mouth of Turaglas, holds absolute power. His word is law, and every order is to be obeyed instantly and without question. The largest and most active feast operates in the city of Abbervale—some twenty leagues from the mountain. Its Mouth is a dragonborn pastry chef (and wizard) by the name of Kovutu.

Most Feeders keep their true religious affiliation secret, dwelling unnoticed amidst their fellow citizens. They gather at irregular intervals to practice vile rites, offering blood-sacrifices of their neighbors, whom they consume alive in a cannibalistic orgy of violence.

They work behind the scenes to instigate communal violence—wars, riots, and the like—allowing them to "disappear" a greater number of sacrifices, or else to afflict a region with famine and want, dedicating the slow, wasting deaths of their fellows to the all-consuming Devourer.

Two sacred (well, profane) titles exist separately from the individual Feasts. The Keeper of the Burning Tongue is a high priest responsible for maintaining the Temple in the mountain, the heart of all Turaglas-worship. The current Keeper is a human priestess by the name of Lenolai Gronn.

She, in turn, commands the Wrath of Turaglas, a champion of the sect who carries her word through the wilds to the individual Mouths and slaughters both enemies of the sect and members who the Keeper believes have somehow betrayed their calling. The current Wrath is Cobrul Uthgren (page 37).

Precepts

The Feasts of Turaglas operate, more or less, under the following principles.

✦ In the borning days of the new age, the Ebon Maw will rely on us, His faithful, to bring it mortal souls to devour, for while it consumes all, these delight Him most.

✦ When it has grown strong, the Devourer shall consume the world entire. Only the faithful will be spared the devastation to come. And we shall rebuild and replenish the world behind Him, devoting all our society to His honor, until the time comes to feed again. So shall the cycle continue, through all the ages, and through it shall we alone endure.

Obviously, most cultists of Turaglas don't entirely grasp the notion that their master intends to consume *everything*, leaving nothing behind to rule or rebuild.

While their precepts are surprisingly strict for a demonic cult, however, advancement is a chaotic affair. Anyone can sue for a higher position, becoming a Mouth or even the new Keeper of the Burning Tongue—they simply have to take the post from whoever currently holds it.

Worship of Turaglas appeals most to the gluttonous and the greedy, those who like the idea of a "god" who not only approves of but encourages their rapacious leanings, and who might offer the chance to rule a world stripped of competitors. A large minority of cultists, however, are truly psychotic, madmen (and other creatures) who simply enjoy the notion of bloodshed and cannibalism. A few savage tribes have been suborned by the Feeders, tricked into believing their predatory spirit-gods are aspects of Turaglas itself.

Cobrul Uthgren, the Wrath of Turaglas **Level 20 Elite Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 5,600

Initiative +22 **Senses** Perception +15
Aura of Despair aura 2; enemies take take a -2 penalty to defenses while in the aura.
HP 298; **Bloodied** 149
AC 36; **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 36
Immune fear; **Resist** 15 poison
Saving Throws +2
Speed 7
Action Points 1

White Talon Strike (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+25 vs. AC; 3d6 + 7 damage and Cobrul shifts 1 square. On a critical hit, the target is also weakened until the end of Cobrul's next turn, and Cobrul gains 10 temporary hit points.

Longbow (standard; at will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +25 vs. AC; 2d10 + 4 damage.

White Talon Riposte (immediate interrupt when an adjacent foe targets Uthgren with a melee attack) ✦ **Weapon**
Ulthgren makes a *White Talon strike* attack against the triggering foe.

Curse of Terror (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Fear, Psychic**
Close burst 3; +23 vs. Will; 2d8 + 7 psychic damage, and the target moves its speed + 6 squares away from Uthgren, avoiding unsafe squares and difficult terrain if it can. This movement provokes opportunity attacks.

Curse of Consumption (standard; recharge ⚅)
Ranged 10; +23 vs. Fortitude; the target is dazed and weakened (save ends both). Although this attack normally does not deal damage, Uthgren does gain his extra damage for combat advantage when making a *curse of consumption* attack.

Combat Advantage
Uthgren deals an extra 2d6 damage and deals critical hits on an 18 or higher against any target he has combat advantage against.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Acrobatics +23, Athletics +20, History +19, Religion +19, Stealth +23
Str 20 (+15) **Dex** 26 (+18) **Wis** 21 (+15)
Con 23 (+16) **Int** 19 (+14) **Cha** 23 (+16)
Equipment: leather armor, *White Talon* (shortsword), longbow, 20 arrows, holy symbol of Turaglas

Cobrul Uthgren, the Wrath of Turaglas

One the most potent and infamous Feeders, Cobrul Uthgren has held his position for several years. It is he who carries out the Keepers' most important tasks, he who leads the cult's most militant endeavors—and he whom a meddling party of PCs are most likely to encounter.

Description

Cobrul Uthgren is a tall, heavily muscled man. His face is hideously ugly, due to a series of scars and multiple teeth lost in battle. His hair is bright red, and he wears a patchy beard and moustache in a vain (in both senses of the word) attempt to cover his scarring.

Cobrul Uthgren Tactics

Uthgren prefers to ambush his prey or strike from behind while allies keep them occupied. He uses his *curse* abilities on distant foes, keeping them at bay while he focuses his melee attacks on a chosen target.

Uthgren fears little for his own life. If he feels the Feeders require information or a warning about their enemies (such as the PCs), he might attempt to flee, but otherwise he fights to the death. In his last moments, if possible, he tries to ensure that *White Talon*, the Fang of Turaglas that he wields, is safe from enemy hands.

History and Objectives

Uthgren has always been a greedy, violent sort, fighting on the streets of Abbervale since his childhood and graduating to membership in a mercenary company in his teens. Always vain about his looks—which,

even before his disfigurement, weren't nearly as fine as he believed—he grew increasingly resentful after a battle left his face badly scarred. The injury might well have affected his brain as well, for Uthgren turned from vicious to downright sadistic, even nihilistic. When he learned of the Feeders, he couldn't make himself useful to them fast enough.

Unlike some other cultists, Uthgren has no interest in ruling a new world after Turaglas has consumed the old. He simply wants to see all life destroyed, for everyone to suffer and die in vengeance for his own embittered life.

The Feeders' Utensils

The Feeders of the Ebon Maw possess magic rarely seen beyond their ranks.

THE FANGS OF TURAGLAS

Forged from ores that Turaglas itself consumed and regurgitated, bound with foul enchantments, these unholy blades are inexorably linked with the Devourer.

There are 13 of these weapons: one dagger, two spears, one longspear, one war pick, one greatsword, three longswords, three short swords, and one bastard sword. At the current time, the Feeders possess five of the Fangs—one shortspear, the greatsword, two longswords, and a short sword (*White Talon*, wielded by Uthgren). They are constantly hunting for the other eight, and any character who possesses one can expect no end to their efforts to take it.

Each Fang is a *lifebane weapon* (see below) that is wholly consecrated to the Ebon Maw. Each individual slain by these weapons grants Turaglas additional power. If someone is slain by one of these weapons within line of sight to Turaglas itself, the demon prince can activate its *digested essence* ability as though it had slain and consumed the creature itself. More importantly, legend claims that each life taken by one of these blades brings the Devourer that much nearer to full awakening and to shattering the walls of its prison.

Lifebane Weapon **Level 15+**

This weapon creates a conduit, funneling your foe's weakness into your own strength.

Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	Lvl 25	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp	Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp

Weapon: Heavy Blade, Light Blade, Pick, Spear
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: The target is weakened until the end of your next turn, and you gain 10 temporary hit points. If those temporary hit points haven't already been used, you lose them at the end of your next turn.
Level 25 or 30: You gain 15 temporary hit points.
Power (**At-Will ✦ Necrotic**): Free Action. Half the damage you deal with this weapon is necrotic damage. Another free action returns the damage to normal.
Power (**Daily ✦ Necrotic**): Free Action. Activate this power when you hit with the weapon. The target is weakened (save ends), and you gain 10 temporary hit points. If those temporary hit points haven't already been used, you lose them when the target saves against the weakened effect.
Level 25 or 30: You gain 15 temporary hit points.

The Devourer's Realm

Long has Sholo-Tovoth remained locked away from the rest of the Abyss. As the Devourer stirs and the walls between worlds weaken, however, so do the Fields of Consumption once more exert their influence on surrounding layers, birth horrid beasts to devour one another—and all other creatures on whom Turaglas would set them—in a paroxysm of anthropophagic carnage.

Obviously, no outsider could observe Sholo-Tovoth during the Ebon Maw's slumber, as the layer was isolated. Presented here is the plane as it was before Turaglas's imprisonment, and as it will swiftly become again once Turaglas has been fully roused.

Sholo-Tovoth is a region of pure, predatory hunger. Everything within operates on a brutal cycle of the strong feeding on the weak. In every region, great sinkholes open and close, dropping victims into shallow pools of digestive acids that strip flesh from bone with agonizing slowness. Travelers find that the taste of food no longer satisfies and begin to feel intense cravings for sentient flesh.

To the north, west, and south, the Fields of Consumption are bounded by a range of hideous mountains called the Gnashing Crags. They are jagged peaks that resemble nothing so much as the lower teeth of an unimaginably huge maw—the mouth, perhaps, of the Abyss itself. Ancient tales maintain that, in the midst of the murky clouds above, one can occasionally catch a glimpse of mountains hanging down from above in a second set of jaws, incomprehensible stalactites from beyond the sky itself.

Passes through thee Gnashing Crags are jagged and precarious, and the slightest drop of blood attracts all manner of insects and predators from within the peaks' infinite crevices. Hot winds blow through these chasms, threatening to knock travelers from their unsteady perches or to choke them with the stench of rot.

To the east, those acrid winds seep across flat plains of cracked earth, housing enormous purple worms below, and above which vrock and other scavengers circle in search of carrion—or living "pre-carrion." Those who survive the badlands might eventually reach the massive Valthuin Plateau. A "tongue" of stone that rises hundreds of feet above the flat earth, dozens of miles wide and several hundred long, it houses the only true communities of Sholo-Tovoth. Several large towns and even full-fledged cities squat atop the great plateau; the largest is Taan Shavas, a veritable metropolis of thousands. Here, the buildings stand tall beside broad roads of packed earth, but the doors are barred, the shutters reinforced. There is no food here save the citizens themselves; all other consumables rot away upon approaching the city gates. Social caste, trade, and all aspects of life in Taan Shavas are based entirely on the question of who is strong enough—or has sufficient allies—to eat whom.

To the southeast of Valthuin, the towering trees of the Ravenous Wood reach nearly as high as the plateau itself, and as that plateau descends in the east, it drops travelers into the center of that horrid forest. Here, the soil is rich with spilled blood, trees run not with sap but bile, and the leaves reach for passersby with serrated edges. The Ravenous Wood is home to demons and other predators, including the dread turagathshnee, but it is the ever-hungry trees that pose the greatest threat.

Finally, in the farthest eastern reaches of Sholo-Tovoth, an acid-tainted swamp becomes the coast of an enormous sea of gastric juices. The "water" drops away to impossible depths—perhaps even, some say, draining into the River Styx itself. It is from across (or perhaps within) this sea that the hot winds of Sholo-Tovoth blow. Hideous mutated sharks and beasts that are naught but clusters of tentacles around rapacious beaks hunt the foul waters. It is here, in unmapped caverns in the deepest reaches, that Turaglas stirs in its slumber and slowly claws its way toward consciousness.

about the author

Ari Marmell was born in New York, moved to Houston when he was a year old, moved to Austin when he was 27, but has spent most of his life living in other worlds through a combination of writing and roleplaying games. He has been writing more or less constantly for the last dozen years, though he has only been paid for it the past five. He is the author of multiple roleplaying game supplements including work on Dungeons & Dragons. Ari lives in Austin with his wife, George, and two cats. Look for *Agents of Artifice*, the new novel from Ari Marmell—out now!

Ecology of the Rust Monster

by Shawn Merwin
illustrations by Adam Gillespie & Jason A. Engle
Cartography by Sean Macdonald

"Gather 'round, my children. You've asked for another tale, and another tale you shall have. You've heard me speak of the fiercest of the dragons that breathe fire and ice. I've told you about the deadliest of demons and the most nightmarish creatures from worlds beyond our own. I've heard tales of the bravest of warriors and most cunning of rogues, men and women brave enough to stand before villains so hideous that the very sight of them could kill a normal person. But listen closely, young ones, and I will tell you of a creature that even the boldest of heroes flees from!"

History

Sages the world over have many theories regarding the origins of the rust monster; however, none of them can say with any genuine certainty where the creatures came from or what the sources of their strange and destructive powers are. Doomsday cultists claim the creatures are harbingers of the end of civilization, while more exotic theories exist—such as the one stating the creatures were a mad wizard's invention to ward himself against the impending

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attack of the chain devils known as kyton. Each belief about the genesis of the rust monster is as wild and speculative as the next.

More reasonable experts on the matter—those who have had an opportunity to study the creatures—put forth a slightly duller but more plausible explanation: Rust monsters are creatures of the natural world whose habitats and proximity to metallic ore necessitated an evolutionary change. Scarcity of organic matter to act as food for the creatures forced a mutation that allowed them to gain sustenance through the intake of metallic material, or more precisely, *rusted* metallic material.

Much of the mystery (and the outlandish stories) behind the rust monster is a result of its habitat. The creatures, in their natural environment, tend to live deep beneath the surface, in proximity to the veins of the metallic ore that offer them sustenance. With a habitat so far removed from the population centers of most other creatures of the natural world, the rust monster is often associated with other creatures that lurk in the Underdark, particularly aberrations and other creatures from the Far Realm.

Early Encounters

As the surface-dwelling humanoids achieved advances in technology, particularly in the areas of mining and smelting, the likelihood of interaction with the rust monster increased dramatically. Unfortunately, the same technology that allowed surface dwellers to delve into the depths of the earth—iron picks, steel shovels, copper pipes—ensured that the rust monsters would be seen as little more than vile and destructive nuisances. (The Dwarven word for the creature, and its translation into other languages from the Dwarven, cannot be repeated in polite company.)

Ironically, the use of rails and ore carts brought more than a few rust monsters much closer to the surface. The rails on which the ore carts ran acted as a continuous feast for the creatures. The collection of large amounts of ore closer and closer to the surface drew the creatures ever upward, providing them with both the incentive to reach the surface and the means to survive and prosper once they got there.

Attempts at Domestication

After the existence of rust monsters was confirmed and people learned more about their strange powers, enterprising individuals saw the potential for the creatures to be used as tools and weapons.

The first documented use of the rust monster as tools of civilized forces were in battles between denizens of the underworld, particularly the drow and the duergar. Spies and agents of each group attempted to release the creatures in militarily strategic areas containing metal: armories and weapon depositories, warehouses containing metal, fortifications made of metals, and so on. One well-placed rust monster could wreak more devastation on an enemy's infrastructure and supplies than a large number of troops or a costly ritual. When more became known of the strange abilities of the rust monster, these tactics also spread to the surface world. Warring nations, looking for any advantage in their prolonged conflicts, unleashed semidomesticated rust monsters with the hopes the creatures would weaken the enemy's infrastructure.

After use of rust monsters in warfare became known, individuals with the resources to procure the creatures used them in smaller instances of sabotage. Rival businesses, mining companies, guilds, and even adventuring companies stooped to deploying rust monsters against their competitors. Often the collateral damage in these small conflicts spread far beyond the limits of the intended targets.

The uses of the rust monster in warfare and sabotage only added to their reputation as a nuisance and bringer of woe. More often than not, the creatures ended up doing more damage to their keepers than to the enemy. After a number of instances where rust monsters escaped from "farms" where domestication was attempted—resulting in the destruction of countless villages, towns, and cities—many civilized areas were forced to ban the import, domestication, and sale of the rust monster. In locations where the infrastructure makes use of metallic materials, the penalty for even possessing a rust monster can be as harsh as heavy fines, imprisonment, and even execution.

Recent Research

Interest in the rust monster as a scientific curiosity exploded when it was learned, only a few years ago, that the creature can store *residuum* in its body after eating dweomered metal. Most of the earliest encounters with rust monsters involved only nonmagic metals, so this *residuum*-storing capability of the creature was never known. Even when the creatures came into contact with the adventurers exploring deeper into the places where the rust monsters laired, very few adventurers whose magic gear was destroyed and eaten by the creatures remained in the area long enough to learn of this aspect, assuming they survived the encounters.

Individuals with more ambition than intellect or common sense, upon learning about the rust monster's ability to store *residuum* from consumed magic

metal, schemed for ways to take advantage of this ability. They reasoned that if unwanted magic items are sold for a fraction of what it cost to create them, and if the *residuum* recovered from the Disenchant Magic Item ritual is similarly just a fraction of the value of the item, then feeding unwanted or unusable magic items to rust monsters could be a lucrative business.

However, these schemers failed to realize several problems with such plans. Keeping rust monsters in captivity required a great deal of capital and attention—so many escaped captivity and did extensive damage that the cost greatly outweighed the potential gain. The sharp claws of the rust monster can dig through all but the hardest natural materials, and obviously any sort of metal restraints are useless in holding the creatures.

Rust monsters in captivity failed to breed and thrive as they do in their natural environs. To get the *residuum* from the creature, the rust monster must be cut open, thus killing the beast, and they turned out to be somehow resistant to efforts made to bring them back to life. Worst of all, the amount of time needed for the rust monster to digest the magic metal and leave the *residuum* varied. After a magic metal object is consumed, the creature must fully digest the rusted metal. Cutting open the creature too soon might reveal just useless, partially digested rusted metal. However, if the *residuum* was left inside the creature too long, it began to be absorbed by the creature—sometimes to the point that less *residuum* is present than would have been gained through a simple Disenchant Magic Item ritual.

How Much Is Enough?

DMs who want to integrate residuum found inside a rust monster into an encounter, adventure, or even campaign can use the information in the rust monster nightmare below to help figure out how much is enough. (See page 124 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for treasure guidelines, also.)

Physiology and Habitat

More frequent contact with the beast called the rust monster has moved what is known about the beast past the realm of myth into an area of scientific inquiry and study. This study has revealed much about the creature, although what has been learned has made the creature no less wondrous—and no less feared and hated for the destruction it can bring to civilization.

Natural Habitat and Social Structure

The most conducive habitat for the rust monster is a sheltered underground area rich in naturally occurring metallic ore. In such an environment, a colony of 12 to 40 rust monsters can survive for months, or even years, without the need to uproot themselves in search of additional sustenance. Such an area provides plenty of nourishment, while at the same time requiring the colony of rust monsters to work together to find and harvest their required food, protect themselves, raise their young, and survive.

In such an environment, generally three to five adult males work in cooperation with five to seven adult females in the creation of the colony. Each female, depending on the stability of the colony and the abundance of food, can rear from one to six offspring at a time. The males and nonpregnant adult females labor at digging through the stone to find the metallic ore needed to survive. Ore found is brought back to the colony and shared. The newborn rust monster lacks sufficient secretion from its rust sac to oxidize its own meals, so it relies on others to prepare its food for consumption.

Once the needs of the pregnant females and young in the colony are met, the adults consume the rest of the food. If there is not enough food to meet the nutritional needs of the adult population, the adults generally fight over the food. Generally these fights are not to the death, although in this way the weaker of the rust monsters are generally forced to leave the colony and find their own food sources elsewhere. However, the rust monster is by no means any more intelligent that any other beast. This social organization that serves a rust monster colony is instinctual rather than contractual.

Colonies are formed when one dominant male or female finds an abundance of ore and allows other rust monsters to join it in working the ore. In this way, the creatures are not unlike the dwarves that revile them so. In the absence of abundant ore, the rust monsters—whether male or female—tend to be solitary creatures searching for enough food to survive.

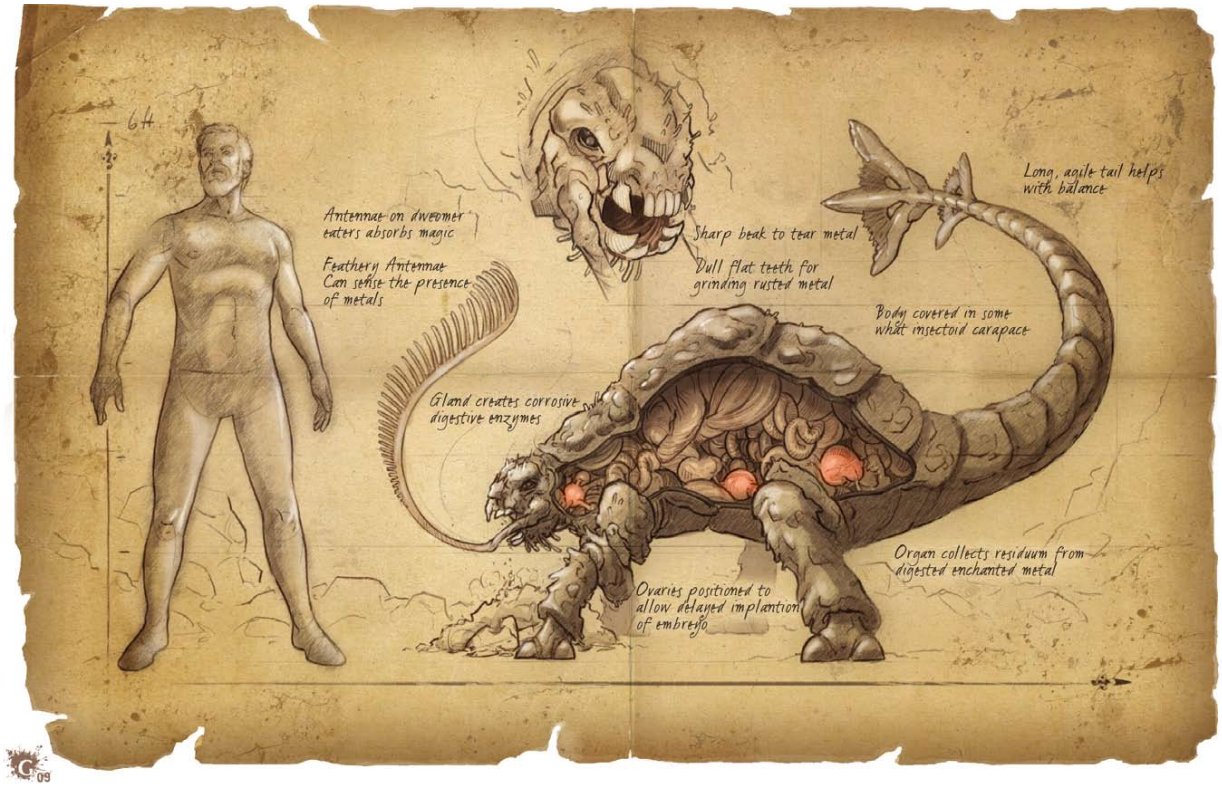
Oddly enough, experts on the rust monster believe that while other species thrive in an environment where food is overabundant, the rust monsters' social structure breaks down when in such conditions. Two primary reasons exist for this. First, when an overabundance of food is present, the rust monster tends

to reproduce too quickly and prolifically, and soon the colony breaks down with too many young.

The other reason has to do with the chemical reaction that takes place in a male rust monster when it digests too much metal, or metal that is too pure. A rust monster partaking of too much metal or too refined a metal has a reaction not unlike a humanoid addicted to drugs or alcohol. The creature craves more of the metal, becomes unwilling to share the metal with other rust monsters, and finally becomes violent if it cannot have as much metal as it needs. This veritable addiction can lead to a breakdown of the colony's delicately balanced social structure. Even something such as a typical party of adventurers, with all their worked metal gear, can disrupt a thriving colony. As soon as the males get a taste of the iron or steel weapons and armor, the gold or platinum coins, and the silver jewelry, the violent reaction is triggered and the colony falls apart from the inside.

Physiology and Diet

Whatever the origins of the rust monster, none can dispute that the creature's main source of nourishment is rusted metallic material. Experts on the creature differ on whether the process by which the rust monster survives is natural or magical, but none deny that it is fascinating.


64
Antennae on dweomer eaters absorbs magic
Feathery Antennae Can sense the presence of metals
Sharp beak to tear metal
Dull flat teeth for grinding rusted metal
Long, agile tail helps with balance
Body covered in some what insectoid carapace
Gland creates corrosive digestive enzymes
Organ collects residuum from digested enchanted metal
Ovaries positioned to allow delayed implantion of embryo

The process begins in a gland located in the rust monster's throat called the rust sac. This gland produces an oxidizing substance that, when it comes into contact with metal, rusts it practically immediately. Ducts lead from the rust sac into the creature's mouth, which mean that the creature's entire mouth—including the teeth and tongue—are awash in this substance. As a result, a rust monster's bite, in addition to being very powerful, delivers enough of the oxidizing substance to be harmful to any metallic substances, including armor and weapons.

Ducts also lead from the rust sac into the blood of the creature. While the amount of the oxidizing substance in the blood is less than what is in the mouth, enough is present in the blood to pose a risk to weapons that draw blood when they strike the rust monster.

Interestingly, experiments have shown that in the absence of metallic substances, rust monsters seem partial to mammalian blood as a food source. Many experts believe that rust monsters are therefore naturally susceptible to a form of vampirism. More preposterous theories claim that mammalian blood contains metal! It is undisputable, however, that when no other natural form of metal is present, but an abundance of blood is nearby, the rust monster is drawn to the blood as if it was metallic.

The most basic staple of the rust monster's diet is unworked metallic ore. The rust monster can sense such ore if within several hundred feet of it, even through solid rock. Using its powerful claws for digging, the creature can slowly and methodically tunnel through solid rock until it reaches the ore. Its beaklike mouth can clear rock away from the metallic substance it is seeking. After using the oxidizing substance in its saliva to rust the ore, the creature's

large, flat, platelike teeth grind the rusted metal into digestible flakes.

The rust flakes travel down the throat and into the stomach, as with other mammalian creatures. In addition to other glands that supply the stomach with substances for digestion, another gland produces a substance with the sole purpose of turning the rusted material into nutrients that the rust monster's body can use.

In the course of a normal meal, the rust monster consumes a large amount of rock. This rocky material that is swallowed with the metal is held in the stomach for a short time, and it assists in the processing and digesting of the metal into the nutrients used by the body. Some also believe that small amounts of the rock are used in the creation of the bony plates that cover the rust monster's body. Undigested and unused rock material is eliminated from the body as normal waste.

As was mentioned previously, the rust monster's physiology is designed best for the consumption and processing of naturally occurring metallic ore. The baser metals, such as iron and copper, are sufficient for the survival and prosperity of the creature. More precious metals, particularly gold and platinum, can sustain a rust monster, although they are of less nutritional value: this is akin to a child preferring sweets even though onions and potatoes are better for their growth and development. However, the rust monster does not have a mother that can enforce the proper diet with a stern word or a hickory switch.

Where the rust monster is truly at risk, however, is in the consumption of metal that has been worked. The smelting process removes the impurities from the ore, making it highly concentrated. Whereas they normally consume ore mixed with dirt, rock, and other substances found in the earth, smelted metal is quite pure. Imagine if a man raised drinking watered-down grog or wine suddenly found the finest elven wine or the strongest dwarven ale at his table. The difference would be not only noticeable, but also quite deleterious indeed!

And so it is similar with the rust monster and worked metal. The unadulterated strength of the metal affects the rust monster's system and brings about changes in the creature. The powerful rush of nutrients into the rust monster's system overpowers the creature's social instincts. It craves the more concentrated metal to the point that it is willing to destroy its own kind to get it. While just one instance of exposure to worked metal can cause a creature's behavior to change slightly, it takes repeated and prolonged ingestion of such metal to cause the creature to truly lose its way. But as we will see, the imbibing of worked metal is not the only thing that can cause a rust monster to change in truly dramatic ways.

Instant Transformations

While the ability of the rust monster to instantly oxidize and consume metal is totally amazing by itself, what happens when it eats enchanted metal is nothing short of miraculous. As wizards and sages have known for years, *residuum* is an element left behind when a magic item is disenchanted. That *residuum* can thereafter be used to fuel a variety of rituals.

Through a purely coincidental encounter between a rust monster and an enraged barbarian who lost his magic executioner's axe to the beast, it was learned that the rust monster has a special organ dubbed the *residuum pouch*. This small sac is connected to the digestive track of the rust monster between the stomach and the intestines. After the magic metal is digested, the *residuum* is diverted from the intestines to the *residuum pouch*. Once there, the *residuum* sits for a period of time. During this time, which can be anywhere from a few minutes to several weeks, the *residuum* is absorbed into the rust monster's body through ducts from the *residuum pouch* back into the intestines.

The rust monster nightmare still needs to consume rusted metal to survive, but it can also gain sustenance from magic. For example, a wizard who uses a magic orb to attack the rust monster nightmare might find that the some of the orb's power is absorbed, causing the orb to decay, even though the orb never makes contact with the creature. An item might even be rendered useless if it decays enough. The rust monster nightmare can then consume the magic item, just as it could eat a rusted metal item.

The speed of the transformation between rust monster and rust monster nightmare is astounding. Some experts believe that the long antennae and pluming tail of the rust monster, which is sensitive to metal, are magic conduits that are altered by the existence of *residuum* in them. Hence, an almost ritual-like occurrence takes place in the antennae and tail when those appendages are infused with *residuum*, leading to inexplicable and devastating new powers, as well as a rapid increase in size and strength.

Some of the more imaginative thinkers on the subject of the rust monster theorize that if the magical properties of the antennae and tail can react in such a way when exposed to residuum, it is likely that similar transformations could take place when exposed to other forces, such as highly magnetized metal, to different chemical compounds, or even to strong emotions.

Insectoid or Mammalian?

Many early observers of the rust monster mistakenly assumed the creature was insectoid. This was certainly an understandable mistake. The creature's hard, seemingly chitinous covering, the jointed and armored legs, and the large feathery antennae all indicated a physiology that resembled a variety of insects. (One early description of the creature was "the metal mantis.")

Closer examination of the creature, in concert with the first true vivisections of the beast, revealed otherwise. The internal organs, including one heart, one stomach, one liver, two kidneys, and most of the other organs associated with mammals, were all present. However, what makes the creature the unique specimen that it is are the extra organs it possesses.

One intriguing way in which the creature resembles some mammals is a peculiar aspect of the female's reproductive system. When an embryo in a female rust monster in fertilized, the embryo doesn't immediately implant in the uterine wall. This phenomenon, known as embryonic diapause, is present in a few other species, particular those that need to go for long periods of time without the required nutrition.

Essentially, the female rust monster can carry between one and eight fertilized embryos without truly being pregnant. The females can stay in that condition for up to 2 years. When the female's body is in a state where it is healthy enough to support the young, then the embryos implant and begin to gestate. This mechanism that ensures the female is in a situation to support its young is another hurdle to rust monster domestication. The circumstances that are necessary to allow the embryos to implant are almost impossible to maintain in a nonnatural habitat. Female rust monsters in captivity very rarely give birth, as intrepid would-be rust monster breeders continue to learn at the cost of their fortunes.

Knowledge of Rust Monster

Arcana

DC 10: Rust monsters are creatures that have the ability to rust through metal objects and then eat them.

DC 15: A rust monster can rust metal with its bite. The blood of the creature also contains a rusting substance, so even damaging them with metal can leave metal weapons at risk.

DC 20: Rust monsters that eat magic metal can store ***residuum***, a substance used in magical rituals, in their bodies. This ***residuum*** can be harvested if the creature is killed when the metal has digested but before the ***residuum*** is absorbed.

Dungeoneering

DC 15: A rust monster lair is generally recognizable by thin, winding tunnels that follow precisely the course of the vein of metal through the ground.

DC 20: A lair of a rust monster colony can be a very dangerous place, because a swarm of young rust monsters could be encountered, and one altered rust monster might also be present, such as a rust monster lodestone.

History

DC 15: Unscrupulous leaders in wars both above and below the ground have used rust monsters as weapons. In many cases, the rust monsters did more damage to their keepers than to the enemy.

DC 20: Many nations and cities have obscure laws on the books making it illegal to purchase, sell, raise, or even possess a living rust monster.

Nature

DC 15: Rust monsters are normally found far below the earth, in places where there is an abundance of naturally occurring metallic ore.

DC 20: Rust monsters are very hard to domesticate, although they are sometimes used as guards by creatures who do not normally use a great deal of metal, such as fey or lizardfolk.

Alchemical Items and Potions

The strange physiology of the rust monster means that some of its body parts, including its tail, antennae, rust sac, and residuum pouch, can be used in the creation of alchemical items and magic items such as potions. Since the rust monster is such a rare specimen, these items of power are equally rare and difficult to make.

Rust Bomb

Level: 5
Category: Volatile
Time: 1 hour
Component Cost: See below.
Market Price: 200 gp
Key Skill: Arcana or Nature (no check)
The liquid distilled from the rust monster's rust sac spreads from the shattered glass vial across the armor of a foe, leaving gaps in its defenses.

Rust Bomb **Level 5+**

On impact, this glass vial breaks, releasing a rusting agent that begins to deteriorate metal armor.

Lvl 5	50 gp	Lvl 20	5,000 gp
Lvl 10	200 gp	Lvl 25	25,000 gp
Lvl 15	1,000 gp	Lvl 30	125,000 gp

Alchemical Item

Power (Consumable): Standard Action. Make an attack: Ranged 5/10; +8 vs. Reflex; on a hit, a target wearing metal armor or that has a metallic body takes a -1 penalty to AC until the end of the encounter.

Level 10: +13 vs. Reflex
Level 15: +18 vs. Reflex.
Level 20: +23 vs. Reflex.
Level 25: +28 vs. Reflex.
Level 30: +33 vs. Reflex.

Corrosive Oil

Level: 3
Category: Oil
Time: 15 minutes
Component Cost: See below.
Market Price: 400 gp
Key Skill: Arcana or Nature (no check)
The oil made from the blood of a rust monster can coat any nonmetallic surface. Any metallic weapon that comes into contact with the coated surface begins to lose its effectiveness.

Corrosive Oil **Level 3+**

Nonmetallic armor coated with this oil has the ability to lessen the effectiveness of metallic weapons that strike it.

Lvl 3	30 gp	Lvl 18	3,400 gp
Lvl 8	125 gp	Lvl 23	17,000 gp
Lvl 13	650 gp	Lvl 28	85,000 gp

Alchemical Item

Power (Consumable): Standard Action. Apply corrosive oil to a set of nonmetallic armor that you wear. The next time a creature hits you with a metallic weapon, make the following attack: +6 vs. Reflex; on a hit, the attacker takes a -1 penalty to attack rolls with that weapon and a -2 penalty to damage rolls with that weapon (save ends both). *Aftereffect*: The attacker takes a -2 penalty to damage rolls made with that weapon (save ends).

Level 8: +11 vs. Reflex; -3 penalty to damage rolls.
Level 13: +16 vs. Reflex; -5 penalty to damage rolls.
Level 18: +21 vs. Reflex; -6 penalty to damage rolls.
Level 23: +26 vs. Reflex; -8 penalty to damage rolls.
Level 28: +31 vs. Reflex; -9 penalty to damage rolls.

Level: 3+
Category: Curative
Time: 15 minutes
Component Cost: See below
Market Price: 30 gp
Key Skill: Arcana or Nature (no check)
When dried, powdered, and prepared appropriately, a rust monster's antennae can produce a deep red powder that enables a creature to resist the effects of fear.

Bravery Powder **Level 8+**

This powder, made from the antennae of a rust monster terror, helps fortify the spirit against fear effects.

Lvl 3	30 gp	Lvl 18	3,400 gp
Lvl 8	125 gp	Lvl 23	17,000 gp
Lvl 13	650 gp	Lvl 28	85,000 gp

Power (Consumable): Minor Action. You or an adjacent ally can make a saving throw against a fear effect. The source of the effect must be 6th level or lower.
Level 8: The source of the effect must be 11th level or lower.
Level 13: The source of the effect must be 16th level or lower.
Level 18: The source of the effect must be 21st level or lower.
Level 23: The source of the effect must be 26th level or lower.
Level 28: The source of the effect must be 31st level or lower.

New Rust Monsters

The normal form of the creature is the average rust monster, although the young can be dangerous when they attack in a swarm. The text below describes other types of rust monsters that are created when the normal beasts are exposed to large amounts of certain substances. These creatures generally look exactly like a normal rust monster, but the absorption of certain substances or even emotions alters the powers that the creature possesses.

Rust Monster Lodestone

The rust monster lodestone is created when a standard rust monster consumes an unusually large amount of magnetized metal. When this transformation takes place, the creature loses its ability to secrete the metal rusting enzymes from its rust sac. It therefore loses the ability to rust metal, although it can still consume it. However, its inherent magnetism allows it to manipulate magnetic waves, thus giving it the ability to move and damage creatures from a distance.

Rust Monster Lodestone **Level 8 Controller**
Medium natural beast XP 350
Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision
Repulsion aura 2; enemies treat all squares within the aura as difficult terrain.
HP 86; **Bloodied** 43
AC 22; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 22
Speed 6
⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+13 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage, and target slides 1 square, or 2 squares if the target is wearing heavy armor.
Dissolve Metal (standard; encounter) ✦ **Reliable**
Targets a creature wearing or wielding a rusting magic item of 10th level or lower or any nonmagic rusting item; +12 vs. Reflex; the rusting item is destroyed.
Repulsing Strike (standard; recharge ⚃ ⚄ ⚅)
+12 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 6 damage, and target slides 3 squares, or 6 squares if the target is wearing heavy armor.
Lodestone Assault (standard; recharge when first bloodied)
Ranged 5; the rust monster lodestone slides an ally up to 5 squares, then that ally makes a melee basic attack with a +2 power bonus to the attack roll.
Lodestone Pulse (standard; at-will)
Ranged 5; +12 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 6 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the rust monster lodestone's next turn. *Aftereffect:* If the target is wearing heavy armor, it is slowed (save ends).
Magnetic Burst (standard; encounter)
Area burst 2 within 10; +12 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 5 damage, plus an additional 4 damage if the target is wearing heavy armor, and the target is knocked prone.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 8 (+3) **Dex** 16 (+7) **Wis** 18 (+8)
Con 14 (+6) **Int** 2 (+0) **Cha** 12 (+5)

Rust Monster Lodestone Tactics

The rust monster lodestone is generally found as a dominant male in a large rust monster colony. Although the lodestone cannot actually cause a weapon to rust, it can consume an already rusted piece of metal. The lodestone uses its control over magnetic forces to manipulate living creatures, whether enemies or allied rust monsters.

Rust Monster Terror

The rust monster terror mutates from a normal rust monster because of exposure to intense fear and panic absorbed from humanoid creatures that encounter it. The psychic energy released by the terrified emotions is brought into the creature through

Rust Monster Terror **Level 9 Soldier**
Medium natural beast XP 400
Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
HP 94; **Bloodied** 47
AC 25; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 19
Speed 6
⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+16 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the rust monster terror's next turn.
Dissolve Metal (standard; encounter) ✦ **Reliable**
Targets a creature wearing or wielding a rusting magic item of 10th level or lower or any nonmagic rusting item; +12 vs. Reflex; the rusting item is destroyed.
Terror Burst (minor; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Fear**
Burst 1; +12 vs. Will; targets hit by the attack take a -2 penalty to attack rolls and are immobilized (save ends).
Fear Reverberation
If targeted with a fear power, the attack automatically misses, and both the rust monster terror and the attacker take ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends).
Residuum Recovery
A rust monster terror consumes any item it destroys. The *residuum* from any magic items the creature has destroyed can be retrieved from its stomach. The *residuum* is worth the market value of the item (not one-fifth the value).
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 16 (+7) **Dex** 10 (+4) **Wis** 12 (+5)
Con 14 (+6) **Int** 2 (+0) **Cha** 12 (+5)

their sensitive antennae. The energy can then be used by the rust monster terror to attack other creatures. This change in the creature renders the rust sac useless, but the creature can still consume and destroy equipment rusted by other rust monsters.

Rust Monster Terror Tactics

A rust monster terror acts as a guard of thriving rust monster colonies. While it cannot rust metal due to changes in their rust sac, it can consume rusted metal as easily as a normal rust monster. The terror uses *terror burst* when surrounded by strong foes. Assuming there is no nearby rusted metal to consume, a rust monster terror bites its enemies and attempts to keep them away from the females and the young.

Rust Monster Nightmare **Level 24 Solo Controller**
Huge natural beast XP 30,250

Initiative +15 **Senses** Perception +21; blindsight 20
Repulsion aura 4; enemies treat all squares within the aura as difficult terrain.
HP 888; **Bloodied** 444
AC 38; **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 36
Resist psychic 30
Saving Throws +5
Speed 8, teleport 6
Action Points 2

Bite (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +28 vs. AC; 3d8 + 6 damage, and if the target is wearing magic armor, the armor starts decaying; the wearer takes a -1 penalty to AC until the end of encounter. This penalty is cumulative, to a maximum -5.

Consumptive Focus (standard; at-will)
Ranged 5; +27 vs. Reflex; 2d12 + 6 psychic damage, and if the target is wearing magic armor, the armor starts decaying; the wearer takes a -1 penalty to AC until the end of encounter. This penalty is cumulative, to a maximum -5.

Dissolve Item (minor 1/turn; recharge ⚄ ⚅) **F Reliable**
Targets a creature wearing or wielding a decaying magic item of 30th level or lower; +28 vs. Reflex; the decaying magic item is destroyed.

Nightmare's Flurry (standard; at-will)
The rust monster nightmare shifts 4 squares by leaping and makes four melee or ranged basic attacks.

Dweomer Feedback (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
Ranged 10; +26 vs. Fortitude; 3d12 + 6 damage, and the target is stunned (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw*: The target is unconscious (save ends). The rust monster nightmare causes the magical possession of the target to exude painful vibrations.

Psychic Trap (standard; recharge when first bloodied)
Close blast 5; +26 vs. Will; 2d12 + 6 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of the rust monster nightmare's next turn. *Miss*: Half damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the rust monster nightmare's next turn.

Extradimensional Lock (immediate interrupt, when an enemy teleports into or out of a square adjacent to the rust monster nightmare; at-will)
Targets the triggering creature; +27 vs. Will; the teleport fails and the rust monster gains 20 temporary hit points.

Magic Consumption (when the rust monster nightmare is hit by an attack that uses a magic implement or weapon; at-will)
The implement or weapon used in the triggering attack begins decaying; the wielder of the weapon takes a -1 penalty to damage rolls with that weapon until the end of the encounter. This penalty is cumulative, to a maximum of -5.

Residuum Recovery
A rust monster nightmare consumes any item it destroys. The *residuum* from any magic items the creature has destroyed can be retrieved from its stomach. The *residuum* is worth the market value of the item (not one-fifth the value).

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** – (telepathy)
Str 25 (+19) **Dex** 17 (+15) **Wis** 18 (+16)
Con 22 (+18) **Int** 8 (+11) **Cha** 12 (+13)

Rust Monster Nightmare

Imagine if a normal rust monster found its way into the armory of a long-abandoned dwarven stronghold—one that held numerous and powerful magic weapons, armor, and shield, and possibly even an artifact! Through constant ingestion and absorption of the highly enchanted metals of such a place, it is theoretically possible for the creature to mutate into an epic-level threat.

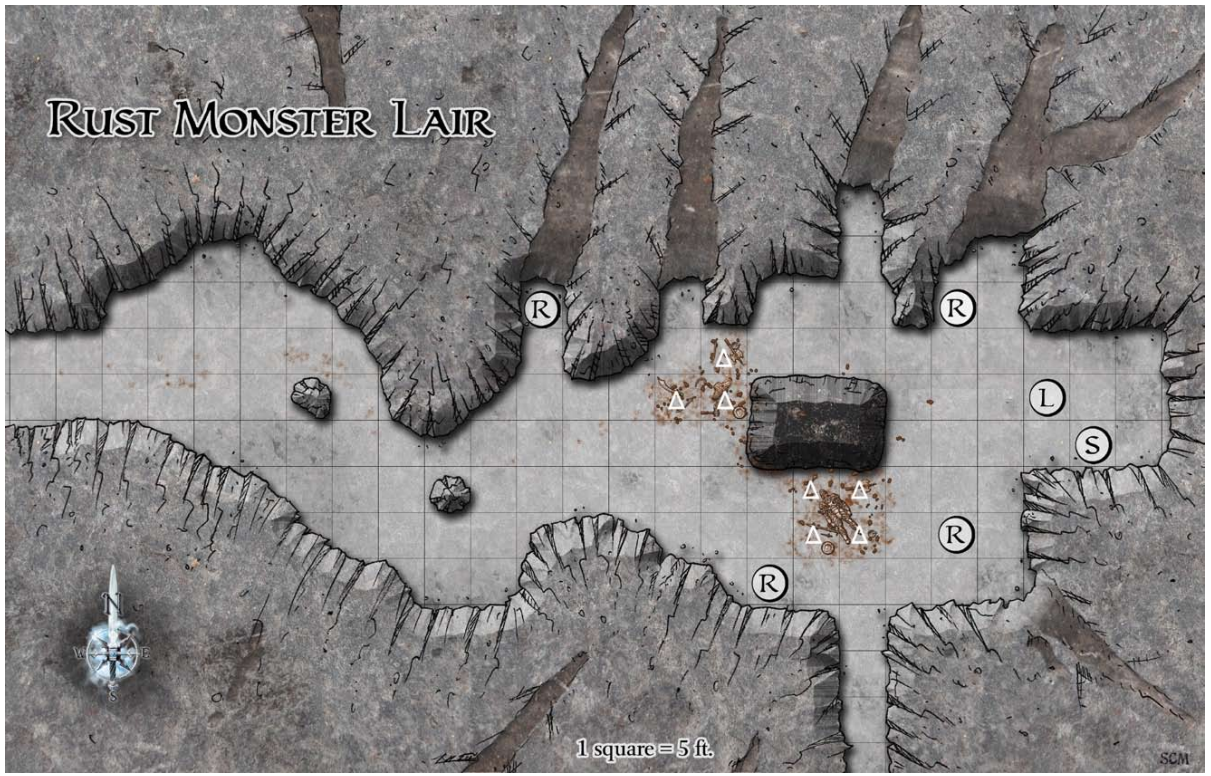
Such a creature could certainly gain a reputation as being a powerful force, to the point where legends might evolve, leading civilized folks to believe that a powerful dragon or demon was lairing there. The creature might even gain sentience, possibly collecting an army of followers and worshipers who revere the great beast for its power, size, and capabilities.

Rust Monster Nightmare Tactics

A rust monster nightmare targets creatures wearing large amounts of metal, as do most of the normal versions of the creature. It uses *dweomer feedback* as early in a battle as possible, then wades into melee range, hoping to maximize a *psychic trap*. It then uses *consumptive focus* against an armored target, or *bite* against a lightly armored enemy, and *dissolve item* if a creature already has a decaying item.

Sample Encounters

Neither the rust monsters nor their altered cousins are naturally violent or aggressive. However, their near-constant craving to consume metallic substances makes them seem like they are inherently violent when they are in the presence of metal. In their natural habitats, they are most often encoun-



tered when they are either searching for food or protecting their lairs. When they are encountered outside of their natural habitat, they are most often being used as guards or attack beasts.

Rust Monster Lair

Encounter Level 8 (1,750 XP)

The lair represented by the map shows what adventurers might find when they come upon a portion of a rust monster colony. In this particular lair, a female rust monster has recently given birth to a swarm of rust monster young. This portion of the colony is led by a rust monster lodestone. Four normal rust monsters are bringing pieces of rusted metallic ore to the swarm to give it nourishment.

Setup

Rust monster lodestone (L)
Young rust monster swarm (S)
4 rust monsters (R)

Lair Features

Colonies with pregnant females or abundant young often contain a large amount of rusted material. These piles of rusted metal could be designated as difficult terrain. To make the encounter more challenging, the DM might make the piles of rusted metal into hazardous terrain. In such a case, creatures other than the rust monsters entering the terrain might take an attack (+8 vs. Reflex; on a hit, the target takes 1d8 damage and ongoing 5 poison damage). Alternatively, PCs cut by the rusted metal could contract a disease.

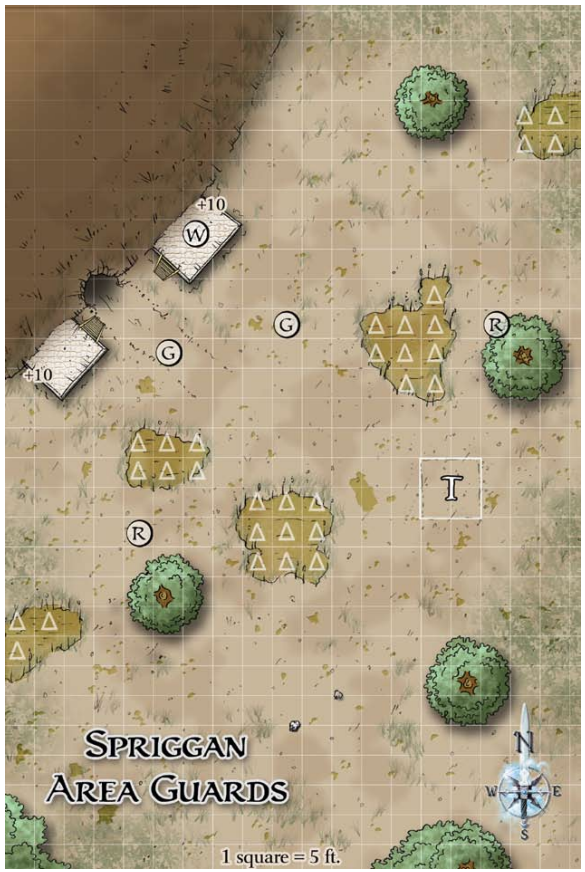
In addition, a lair containing these metallic piles and a rust monster lodestone could be spiced up by allowing the lodestone, as a minor action, to move one or more of the piles to new squares, forcing the PCs to deal with difficult terrain that can be manipulated by the enemy.

Rusty Paralysis Level 8 Disease

This disease affects those cut by rusty metal. The victim gets slowly weaker, and in the final stages the victim becomes paralyzed.

Attack: +11 vs. Fortitude
Endurance improve DC 19, maintain DC 14, worsen DC 13 or lower

The target is cured. ◀ **Initial Effect** The target loses one healing surge that it cannot regain until cured. ◀▶ The target takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls. The target cannot spend healing surges.. ▶ **Final State** The target is restrained.



Rust Monster Guards (Spriggan Lair)

Encounter Level 7 (1,650 XP)

The area represented by the map shows how other creatures might use rust monsters as guards. In this case, a group of spriggans (*Monster Manual 2*, page 192) is using two rust monsters as the first line of defense for their underground lair.

Setup

Spriggan witherer (W)
2 spriggan giant souls (S)
2 rust monsters (R)
False floor pit (T)

Lair Features

A thin metal plate covering a pit might be made a threat if the rust monster was allowed to rust the plate without eating it, thus making it weak and susceptible to breaking when a certain threshold of weight was placed on it. Alternatively, the metal plate could be left whole, but the rust monsters are released when PCs step upon it. When the rust monsters rush forward to attack, they bite the metal plate instead of the PCs, thus triggering the trap while the PCs are in a precarious situation.

The most difficult problem faced by those using rust monsters as guards is keeping them in place, since they normally range far and wide until they come upon a source of metal. The spriggans have devised a method to keep the rust monsters in the area they are supposed to guard. The tricky fey creatures spread fine iron shavings in an area, such as in thick grass or buried under a thin layer of soil. The rust monsters can sense an abundance of metal in the area, but they can find only the tiniest pieces of metal through great effort. As long as no other source of metal is nearby, the rust monster might spend weeks of painstaking labor as they find, rust, and devour the shavings. The genius of this method is that it keeps the rust monsters occupied until a typical adventuring party approaches. The adventurers generally wear or carry so much metal that the rust monsters are immediately drawn to them and away from the metal shavings that held them in their guard areas.

About the Author

Shawn Merwin is a freelance writer, editor, and writing teacher. His latest work in the gaming industry includes the *Dungeon*® magazine adventure "Massacre at Fort Dolor" and *P3: Assault on Nightwyrm Fortress*. Shawn is currently the Global Administrator for the Western Hemisphere (North) in the RPGA's Living Forgotten Realms campaign. He lives in western New York, near the shores of Lake Erie, with his wife and daughter.

D&D INSIDER™ Exclusive Content

Playing Revenants

by Matthew Sernett

illustrations by Tom Baxa
concept art by Richard Whitters

Most of the time, death is the end of the story, but sometimes it's another beginning. A revenant arises not as an aimless corpse of a life lost but as the embodiment of a lost soul given new purpose. Such a creature walks in two worlds. Though the revenant moves among the throngs of the living, it has a phantom life—a puppet mockery of the existence its soul once knew. The revenant is an echo haunted by the memory of itself.

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REVENANT

Resilient souls returned from death to do the work of fate

RACIAL TRAITS
Average Height: 5' 5"-6' 2"
Average Weight: 100-200 lb.

Ability Scores: +2 Constitution, +2 Dexterity
Size: Medium
Speed: 6 squares
Vision: Low-light vision

Languages: Common, choice of one other
Skill Bonuses: +2 Endurance, +2 Intimidate
Undead: You are considered to be an undead creature for effects that relate to that keyword. You are also considered a living creature.
Past Life: Select a race other than revenant. You can take feats, a paragon path, and an epic destiny that have the selected race as a prerequisite, as long as you meet all other prerequisites.
Unnatural Vitality: Whenever you drop to 0 hit points or fewer, you are dying but you can choose to remain conscious until you attempt your first death saving throw. If you remain conscious, you can take only one standard action before you attempt your first death saving throw.
Dark Reaping: You can use ***dark reaping*** as an encounter power.

Dark Reaping **Revenant Racial Power**

You use one death as the seed to sow more destruction.

Encounter ✦ Necrotic
Free Action
Trigger: A creature within 5 squares of you is reduced to 0 hit points
Effect: One creature you hit with an attack you make before the end of your next turn takes an additional 1d8 + Constitution modifier necrotic damage.

For most, death represents the gateway to the afterlife or the end of a natural existence. Yet for some, the Raven Queen bars passage, turning their souls back toward the world. For these rare few, fate has other plans.

Play a revenant if you want . . .
✦ to be eerie, cold, and mysterious.
✦ to strive for or against your fate as an instrument of a greater power.
✦ to live with the memories of a past life whose purpose was unfulfilled.
✦ to be a member of a race that favors the assassin, rogue, and warlock classes.

Physical Qualities

Revenants are souls of the dead returned to a semblance of life by the Raven Queen, but they do not appear as undead horrors or even anything like their former selves. When the Raven Queen reincarnates souls, they exist as her special creations, and they have the bodies of her choosing and creation. In this way, such souls are always marked as representatives of the Raven Queen's power.

A revenant has a body that is slender for his or her height, but this form possesses an uncanny toughness that contradicts the apparent build. Revenants have the same range of complexions as humans, but a revenant's skin is ashen and the features are sunken. Eyes are most commonly solid black with a single point of red light in place of a pupil, but other eerie eye colors—including yellow, white, silver, and gold—are not uncommon, although they always share the same fiery red pupil. In most cases, the eyes lack an iris and pupil, and some glow with a ghostly light. Revenant hair typically ranges from black to white. They can grow facial hair, and males often have beards or mustaches that accentuate their dreadful countenances.

A revenant's face and skin clearly set a member of this unique race apart from other humanoids. A

Awakening

You gasp a breath of cold air like it's your first. Your eyes snap open. Colors seem dim, and every sound is foreign and filled with newness. Rather than warmth, a chill emanates from within you, making your chest feel heavy and your extremities feel ablaze with heat. The world appears strange, and as you struggle to rise, you have the sense that you control a body not your own.

And nothing is your own. You know that. You remember that. That's when other memories come. Before this place, you struggled in . . . somewhere cold. The sky was dark, but it was also somehow alight with flowing color—as if the wind glowed instead of the stars. Snow buried everything, veiling the landscape into funereal forms. And before that . . . other memories—scenes, faces, feelings—all a jumble, all confused like a half-forgotten dream.

You know one thing for certain. You were dead. Judging from how you look and feel, you might be a little dead still. You pick a direction and start walking, noting all you can about what you see and hear as you go. You might not remember everything about who you were, but you can make new memories while you try to find out.

Something else hounds your thoughts as you strike out into an eerily familiar world: The dead don't come back to life by accident. Someone did this to you, and whoever that was had a reason.

revenant's visage has a masklike quality that can be disturbing to normal mortals. Rough, dark scales appear on the flesh near the ends of a revenant's limbs, marking the revenant as one of those the Raven Queen allowed back into the world of the living. Revenant digits end in strong, black fingernails or toenails that resemble claws.

Each revenant is unique, but ties to the Shadowfell draw most to dark colors and clothing that can help them escape notice. Whether because of dark humor or as a warning to others, their clothing and gear bear symbols that are reminders of death or duty. Revenants use raven feathers, bones, chains, grave markers, and skulls for decoration.

Playing a Revenant

Revenants do not live and reproduce like mortal races. Indeed, they are not a true race at all. Each revenant arises in the world only by the will of the Raven Queen. She—or someone she has made a bargain with—has a specific purpose in mind for each soul she returns to the world. This purpose might be plain to the revenant, or it might be a mystery the revenant has to unravel before it can rest. A revenant might doggedly pursue this end or rebel against that fate and try to avoid destiny. The purpose could even change, eluding the revenant or revealing greater goals as steps toward the ultimate end are achieved. Much depends on who brought the revenant back.

If the Raven Queen commanded the soul's return for her own reasons, the revenant might play an important part in the future the Raven Queen foresees. The Raven Queen might send a soul to bring someone or something to the death it has avoided, and the character might have been chosen because of past ties to the target. Perhaps the character's death was somehow wrong, and the Raven Queen reincarnated the soul as a revenant to set right the weave of fate.

Sometimes, the dead one begs to be returned to the world, and the Raven Queen listens for her own reasons.

If another power made a bargain with the Raven Queen, the possibilities are endless. Most deities could simply choose to raise a loyal follower to live again, so if a being of such power resorted to bargaining with the Raven Queen, there must a reason. Perhaps a god wants more of the follower's service, but there is something the deity wants even his most devout servant to forget. Perhaps the new lease on life is intended only as a temporary reprieve wherein the revenant must make up for some mistake made in life. A power might even want to return another deity's follower to life for a purpose hidden from the other gods.

The reason could also be the desire of a being weaker than a true deity. Maybe an exarch raises a soul despite a deity's wishes. Perhaps a devil or archfey has a claim on the soul of a mortal and it seeks to get what it paid for in some bargain the person made in life. A mortal might gain audience with the Raven Queen to plead the case of a deceased friend or enemy. The mortal's aims might be altruistic, selfish, or wicked, sweeping the revenant up in a saga of great glory or terrible woe. Sometimes, the dead one begs to be returned to the world, and the Raven Queen listens for her own reasons.

What lies in store for a revenant who completes its mission changes by the individual. A revenant might seek an end to a painful existence in the mortal world or attempt to earn a place in the heavens by completed deeds to make up for past wrongs. Maybe the revenant is rewarded for fulfilling destiny by being given true life again, in the old body or reincarnated in a new form. A revenant could even be condemned to a horrible fate in the afterlife but consider the accomplishment of the goal worth the price. Perhaps the revenant can't truly die even after accomplishing its goal unless it sees the dead body from its former life.

Revenants usually remember only snippets of their former lives—just enough to push them toward the purpose for which some power raised them. Many don't even remember their names and thus take new ones fitting their dispositions. Memories come in dreams and flashes of insight, often provoked by the revenant's experiences. Brushing shoulders accidentally in the market could call to mind the bumped person as a lifelong friend. The sight of a pale hand moving through lustrous hair could remind the revenant's heart of a lost love. Yet these memories can be

deceptive. The memory of friendship might neglect the betrayal that caused a rift. The lost love might be long dead, and the memory serves only as a lure to the revenant. Each remembrance has its purpose: as a reward, punishment, bait, or aid. All are true, but the power that raised the revenant can sometimes control which truths the revenant recalls.

The rarity of revenants results in few having much knowledge of them. Experts in religion or those who encountered revenants in the past might know of them, but for most people revenants are strange and alien.

Revenant Characteristics: Agile, cold, determined, fearsome, hard-bitten, noble, pragmatic, tragic

Male Names: Bane, Chiseler, Dredge, Riven, Rook, Scourge, Sever, Snick, Tuck, Wrath
Female Names: Blessed, Charm, Fable, Ire, Lash, Maleficence, Raven, Sunder, Vengeance, Vice

Revenant Adventurers

Three sample revenant adventurers are described below.

Carver is a revenant rogue, irreverent about his new existence. Occasional flashes of memory remind him of a life not his own, and strange dreams trouble his sleep. Carver sees these events as problems, and he tries to fix them with strong drink and long nights of revelry. Yet he often finds himself compelled to use his skills to acquire strange objects, and he keeps careful watch on these ill-gotten gains. He's sure he'll find meaning behind the objects—a code or puzzle for which he has not yet found the key.

Nihil is a revenant assassin devoted to the Raven Queen. Her goddess gave her the opportunity to avenge herself upon her killers, and now she has given her existence over to the signs and portents that reveal the Raven Queen's wishes. Troublesome evidence exists that Nihil's understanding of her memories might not be the whole truth—dreams of flight, the taste of fire, and the feel of coins against her skin. But she tries to put these notions out of her mind and focus on her missions. She's sure her faith will someday be rewarded.

Snipe is a revenant ranger who does not relish his new lease on "life." He was tired of death and fighting in his previous existence, and that sense lingers with him still. Bahamut saw in his soul a desire for virtue near the end, and so in death the Platinum Dragon called upon him to once again take up his swords and balance the damage he did as the enforcer for a cabal of wizards. Now Snipe must seek out former allies and betray them. Perhaps their blood on his hands can wash the stain from his soul, but Snipe is uncertain.

Revenants in Your Game

This article describes the assumptions about how revenants work for official D&D® products, but it might be different in your game. Here are some suggestions for how you can change things.

Appearance

Revenants in your game might look exactly like their former selves or even like true undead. Maybe to be reincarnated, a soul must occupy a living body, and your revenant possesses someone else's body. If you go one of these routes, they present some roleplaying challenges and opportunities, and there might be mechanical challenges as well. Should a halfling

revenant be Small? Should a dwarf revenant be slower while wearing heavy armor? Judge these issues for yourself, but when in doubt, err on the side of handling mechanical elements as described in this article, and explain any oddness that might come up as the effects of being raised from death.

Number

This article assumes that one or more PCs are the only revenants in the world, and that if they meet another revenant, it represents a major plot point in the story of their adventures. But maybe a number of revenants returned to the world for some hidden, common purpose. Perhaps revenants are as common as half-orcs or half-elves—the result of desecrated burial or desire for revenge. Revenants could even exist as a true race inextricably tied to death for some reason obscured by legend.

Revenants in your game might look exactly like their former selves or even like true undead.

Memories

This article assumes that a PC has only fragmentary memories from a previous life, but you might play a revenant with no memory of who he or she was before, and the discovery of that previous identity could be a major revelation in the campaign. You might also play a character who knows exactly who he or she was before, and now struggles with that knowledge in a new body with a face that old friends no longer trust. You might even play a revenant of a previous PC who died, picking up right where you left off but with new racial abilities.

Patron

This article presumes the Raven Queen put the PC revenant back in the world, or maybe she did so on behalf of some other power. A soul might even have accepted its quest from a deity directly, knowing it would lose most memories when reincarnated. It could be, however, that no power but the PC's will returns the character from death. Minions of the Raven Queen might hunt this fugitive from the laws of life and death. Maybe some powerful patron, such as a demon lord or archfey, stole the PC's soul and placed the PC in the world as a revenant to do its bidding. The PC might be doing the work of a prince of the Hells in order to win back a soul lost in a bad bargain. Maybe a mortal raised the PC as a hero of old and hopes the PC will do some great deed. A ritual to raise the dead might even go wrong, returning the PC to a half-life, and now the character walks the world with one foot in the grave.

Timing

A revenant need not be dead recently. The Raven Queen or another patron might recall any soul not at its final destination. A soul might be returned to the world seconds or centuries after death, but the most potential for storytelling and roleplaying might lie a generation or two later. Then revenants can see the effects of the former life, have memories of places that aren't quite the same, meet the descendants of remembered friends, and confront old foes who might have mended their ways.

Working Together

The details of how revenants work and a character's past life should be discussed between player and DM. Some players want to leave everything in the DM's hands and simply roleplay the reactions to events as they unfold. Others want to create a lot of the details of a past life. The DM might want help figuring out some details of the story and how to fit things in the campaign, or a DM could want to keep everything secret.

Revenant PCs offer a lot of story and roleplaying potential, but since the character's history could be shared between DM and player, a conversation about it is necessary to avoid any surprises that might cause friction. The DM must be sensitive to the player's sensibilities, even if the revenant's history is completely unknown to the player. So much room exists for interesting and subtle character story twists that DMs should avoid going for anything that might bother the player.

Total Party Kill

So the whole party bought the farm in that encounter last week? Maybe they all come back as revenants to take revenge. They could regain their former bodies and lives after some quest for a higher power, but maybe being dead has its advantages, and the campaign continues its new dance on the dark side.

Racial Feats

Revenants have access to a number of feats that other creatures cannot access.

Heroic-Tier Feats

These feats are available to any revenant character who meets the prerequisites.

Chill of the Grave

Prerequisite: Revenant

Benefit: Your *dark reaping* racial power deals cold and necrotic damage.

Dark Feasting

Prerequisite: Revenant

Benefit: When you deal the additional necrotic damage from your *dark reaping* racial power, you gain temporary hit points equal to the additional necrotic damage you dealt the target.

Death Curse

Prerequisites: Con 13, revenant, Warlock's Curse class feature

Benefit: When you deal the additional necrotic damage from your *dark reaping* racial power to a target under your Warlock's Curse, all other creatures also under your Warlock's Curse take necrotic damage equal to your Constitution modifier.

Death's Blessing

Prerequisite: Revenant

Benefit: You no longer need to eat, drink, or breathe, so you never need to make Endurance checks to resist the effects of starvation, thirst, and suffocation. You are no longer considered a living creature.

Death's Quickening

Prerequisite: Revenant

Benefit: If you drop to 0 or fewer hit points and choose to remain conscious due to Unnatural Vitality, you can take a minor action in addition to the standard action Unnatural Vitality allows.

Divine Fate [Divinity]

Prerequisites: Revenant, Channel Divinity class feature

Benefit: You can invoke divine power to use *divine fate*.

Channel Divinity: Divine Fate Feat Power

A great power has plans for you and turns chance in your favor.

Encounter • Divine
Free Action **Ranged** 10
Trigger: You or an ally fails a skill or ability check, or a saving throw
Effect: The target rerolls the check or saving throw, and takes the higher result.

Draconic Reaping

Prerequisites: Revenant, Dragonborn Soul feat

Benefit: Choose a damage type available in the *dragon breath* dragonborn racial power (*Player's Handbook*, page 34). Your *dark reaping* racial power and *dragon breath* racial power deal that damage type and necrotic damage.

Dragonborn Soul

Prerequisites: Dragonborn, revenant

Benefit: You gain the *dragon breath* dragonborn racial power (*Player's Handbook*, page 34). In a given encounter, you can use either your *dragon breath* racial power or your *dark reaping* racial power.

Drow Soul

Prerequisites: Drow, revenant

Benefit: You gain the Lolthtouched drow racial feature (*Forgotten Realms Player's Guide,* page 8) and its associated powers. In a given encounter, you can use a Lolthtouched power or your *dark reaping* racial power.

Dwarf Soul

Prerequisites: Dwarf, revenant

Benefit: You gain the Dwarven Resilience dwarf racial feature (*Player's Handbook,* page 35). In a given encounter, you can use Dwarven Resilience or your *dark reaping* racial power.

Eladrin Soul

Prerequisites: Eladrin, revenant

Benefit: You gain the *fey step* eladrin racial power (*Player's Handbook,* page 38). In a given encounter, you can use your *fey step* racial power or your *dark reaping* racial power.

Elf Soul

Prerequisites: Elf, revenant

Benefit: You gain the *elven accuracy* elf racial power (*Player's Handbook,* page 40). In a given encounter, you can use your *elven accuracy* racial power or your *dark reaping* racial power.

Empowered Reaping

Prerequisite: Revenant

Benefit: You gain a +2 feat bonus to the damage of your *dark reaping* racial power. This bonus increases to +4 at 11th level and +6 at 21st level.

Genasi Soul

Prerequisites: Genasi, revenant

Benefit: Choose an Elemental Manifestation available to genasi (*Forgotten Realms Player's Guide,* pages 10–11). You gain the racial power associated with that Elemental Manifestation. In a given encounter, you can use your genasi racial power or your *dark reaping* racial power.

Gnome Soul

Prerequisites: Gnome, revenant

Benefit: You gain the *fade away* gnome racial power (*Player's Handbook* 2, page 10). In a given encounter, you can use your *fade away* racial power or your *dark reaping* racial power.

Goliath Soul

Prerequisites: Goliath, revenant

Benefit: You gain the *stone's endurance* goliath racial power of goliaths (*Player's Handbook 2,* page 12). In a given encounter, you can use your *stone's endurance* racial power or your *dark reaping* racial power.

Half-Elf Soul

Prerequisites: Half-elf, revenant

Benefit: You gain the Dilettante half-elf racial feature (*Player's Handbook,* page 42). In a given encounter, you can use the power you chose for Dilettante or your *dark reaping* racial power.

Half-Orc Soul

Prerequisites: Half-orc, revenant

Benefit: You gain the *furious assault* half-orc racial power (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 14). In a given encounter, you can use your *furious assault* racial power or your *dark reaping* racial power.

Halfling Soul

Prerequisites: Halfling, revenant

Benefit: You gain the *second chance* halfling racial power (*Player's Handbook*, page 44). In a given encounter, you can use your *second chance* racial power or your *dark reaping* racial power.

Hellfire Soul

Prerequisites: Revenant, tiefling

Benefit: Your *dark reaping* racial power deals fire damage and necrotic damage.

Human Soul

Prerequisites: Human, revenant

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus to Fortitude, Reflex, and Will defenses.

Life Thief

Prerequisites: Revenant, rogue

Benefit: When you deal necrotic damage with your *dark reaping* racial power with an attack that also deals Sneak Attack damage, you can reroll each Sneak Attack damage die that shows a result of 1 or 2. Reroll until a given die has a result greater than 2.

Marked for Death

Prerequisites: Con 13, revenant, ability to mark a foe

Benefit: When you deal the necrotic damage from your *dark reaping* racial power to a target, other enemies marked by you take necrotic damage equal to your Constitution modifier.

Minotaur Soul

Prerequisites: Minotaur, revenant

Benefit: When you fall unconscious due to having 0 hp or fewer, you can make a basic attack as a free action.

Past Life Flashbacks

Prerequisites: Revenant

Benefit: Before you roll initiative, you can take a –10 penalty to your roll. If you do so, you gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls and checks until the end of your first turn.

Reaper's Quarry

Prerequisites: Con 13, revenant, ranger

Benefit: When you deal the necrotic damage from your *dark reaping* racial power to a target that is also your quarry, each attack that hits that target before the end of your next turn also deals extra necrotic damage equal to your Constitution modifier.

Reaper's Resistance

Prerequisites: Revenant, Death's Blessing feat

Benefit: You gain resist 5 necrotic. This increases to resist 10 necrotic at 11th level, and to resist 15 necrotic at 21st level.

Remembered Knack

Prerequisites: Revenant, any class-specific multiclassing feat that grants training in a skill

Benefit: You gain training in a skill on the class list of the class associated with your class-specific multiclassing feat. Additionally, you gain a +2 bonus to checks with that skill or the skill you gained training in from taking the class-specific multiclass feat.

Shadar-Kai Soul

Prerequisites: Revenant, shadar-kai

Benefit: You gain the *shadow jaunt* shadar-kai racial power (*Dragon* 372, page 6). In a given encounter, you can use your *shadow jaunt* racial power or your *dark reaping* racial power.

Shifter Soul

Prerequisites: Revenant, shifter

Benefit: You gain the *longtooth shifting* shifter racial power or the *razorclaw shifting* shifter racial power (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 16). In a given encounter, you can use your shifter racial power or your *dark reaping* racial power.

Spectral Reaping

Prerequisite: Revenant

Benefit: You ignore insubstantial with all damage from an attack with which you deal the necrotic damage from your *dark reaping* racial power.

Tiefling Soul

Prerequisites: Revenant, tiefling

Benefit: You gain the *infernal wrath* tiefling racial power (*Player's Handbook*, page 48). In a given encounter, you can use your *infernal wrath* racial power or your *dark reaping* racial power.

Warforged Soul

Prerequisites: Revenant, warforged

Benefit: You gain the *warforged resolve* warforged racial power (*Eberron Player's Guide*, page 32). In a given encounter, you can use your *warforged resolve* racial power or your *dark reaping* racial power.

Paragon Feats

Any feat in this section is available to any revenant character of 11th level or higher who meets the feat's other prerequisites.

Cull the Weak

Prerequisite: 11th level, revenant

Benefit: Your *dark reaping* racial power is also triggered when a creature within 10 squares, including you, becomes bloodied.

Death Scorned

Prerequisites: 11th level, Con 13, revenant

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus to death saving throws. You don't die from failing death saving throws until you have rolled a number of failed death saving throws equal to 1 + your Constitution modifier (maximum 5).

Distant Reaping

Prerequisite: 11th level, revenant

Benefit: Creatures within 20 squares of you can trigger your *dark reaping* racial power.

Double Reaping

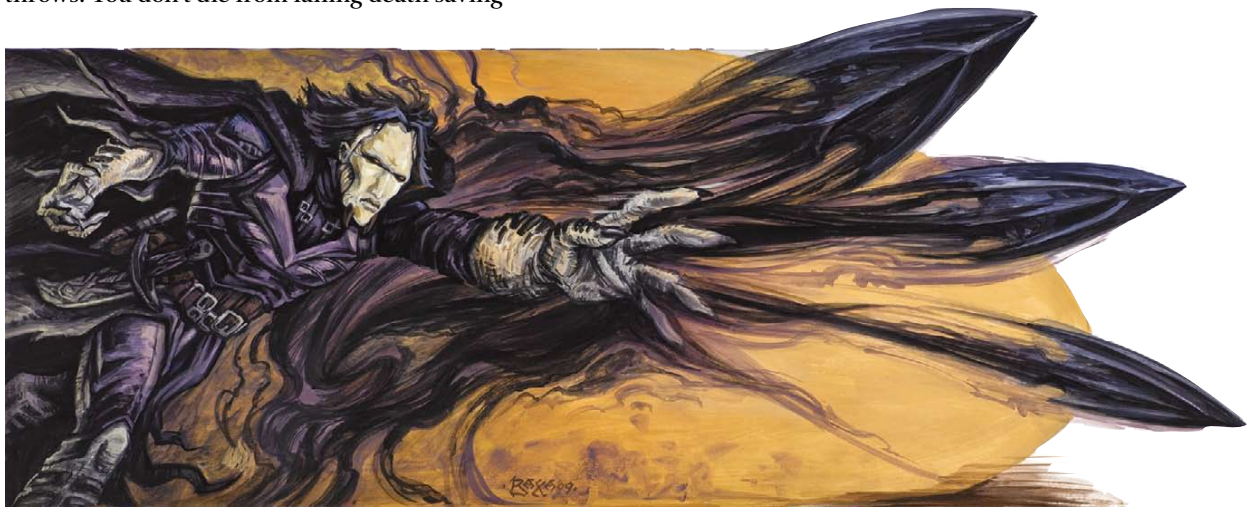
Prerequisites: 11th level, revenant

Benefit: When you deal the necrotic damage from your *dark reaping* racial power to a target, one enemy adjacent to that target takes the same amount of necrotic damage.

Fierce Vitality

Prerequisite: 11th level, revenant

Benefit: If you drop to 0 or fewer hit points and choose to remain conscious due to Unnatural Vitality, you can remain conscious until you fail two death saving throws.



Reaper's Strike

Prerequisites: 11th level, revenant

Benefit: When you use your *dark reaping* racial power, you also gain a +2 bonus to your next attack roll.

Reaping Burst

Prerequisite: 11th level, Con 13, revenant

Benefit: When you use your *dark reaping* racial power, instead of its normal effect you can deal extra necrotic damage equal to your Constitution modifier to all targets you hit with a burst or blast power that you use before the end of your next turn.

Resilience of Death

Prerequisites: 11th level, revenant, Death's Blessing feat

Benefit: You are immune to disease and you gain resist 10 poison. This increases to resist 15 poison at 21st level.

Unnatural Stamina

Prerequisites: 11th level, revenant

Benefit: Increase your number of healing surges by one. When you spend a healing surge, you gain resist 10 cold, poison, and necrotic until the end of your next turn.

Epic Tier

Any feat in this section is available to any revenant character of 21st level or higher who meets the feat's other prerequisites.

Ghostly Vitality

Prerequisites: 21st level, revenant

Benefit: If you drop to 0 or fewer hit points and choose to remain conscious due to Unnatural Vitality, you can take a move action and a minor action in addition to the standard action Unnatural Vitality allows. While you have 0 or fewer hit points, you gain insubstantial.

Eerie Resurgence

Prerequisites: 21st level, revenant

Benefit: You gain a +2 feat bonus to death saving throws. Whenever a result of your death saving throw is 20 or higher, you can spend an extra healing surge. You can also stand as a free action.

Reaping Renewal

Prerequisites: 21st level, revenant

Benefit: You can use *dark reaping* two times during each encounter.

Reaping Synergy

Prerequisites: 21st level, revenant

Benefit: Whenever you use your *dark reaping* racial power, you gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls for powers that deal at least one of the damage types dealt by your *dark reaping* racial power. This bonus lasts until the end of your next turn.

Paragon Path

The following paragon path offers a revenant character a way to highlight an eerie origin and become ghostlike at times.

Avenging Haunt

"Death couldn't stop me. Do you really think you can?"

Prerequisite: Revenant

Death frees souls from the concerns of life, but some wrongs the departed remember—even if the mind has long rotted away. You're the ghost of a life you barely recall; yet, you can't forget what they did. And you won't forgive it either. Some power put you back in this world, and whether or not it did so for this reason, you're out for revenge. Of course, those who wronged you in the past aren't the only ones on your hit list. You received a second chance, and this time you're not letting anything slide.

With each enemy you bury, you feel a little hollower. The cold rage gives way to a numbing chill, and life—your previous one and the half-life you now lead—slips quietly away into oblivion. Still, what difference does it make? You're already dead.

Avenging Haunt Path Features

Ghostly Action (11th level): When you spend an action point, you gain phasing and insubstantial until the end of your next turn.

Death Reprisal (11th level): When an enemy's attack reduces you to 0 or fewer hit points, you gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls against that enemy until the end of your next turn.

Unkillable (16th level): Your Unnatural Vitality racial feature allows you to stay conscious until you die.

Avenging Haunt Powers

Deathly Retort — **Avenging Haunt Attack 11**

Your soul lashes out with necrotic energy at one who would harm you.

Encounter ✦ Necrotic
Immediate Reaction **Close** burst 20
Trigger: A creature within 20 squares of you hits you with an attack.
Target: The triggering creature
Attack: Your highest ability modifier + 4 vs. Fortitude
Level 21: Your highest ability modifier + 6 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target takes necrotic damage equal to the damage you took from the attack.

Haunting Form — **Avenging Haunt Utility 12**

You adopt a ghostly form to achieve your vengeful aims.

Daily
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You gain insubstantial, phasing, and fly 6 (hover, maximum altitude 2 squares) until the end of your next turn.
Sustain Standard: If you don't sustain this power, you can land as a free action.

Death Locus — **Avenging Haunt Attack 20**

After an initial burst of black, life-sapping energy, your body is flooded with a killing darkness that is attracted to those it initially touched.

Daily ✦ Necrotic
Standard Action **Area** burst 1 within 10
Target: Each creature in burst
Attack: Your highest ability modifier + 6 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 5d8 + your highest ability modifier necrotic damage, and if the target attacks you, it takes half the damage it deals you as necrotic damage (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and if the target attacks you before the end of your next turn, the target takes half the damage it deals you as necrotic damage.

Epic Destiny

Only the greatest revenant can aspire to the following epic destiny.

Free Soul

No power binds your soul to its will. At last, you are free.

Prerequisites: 21st level, revenant

You struggled long, and the journey was hard. You've done all they asked and more. And now you're finished. Destiny is a masquerade for other people's plans. No one is going to control your fate—not anymore. Whatever is left of this half-life you lead, you'll live it as you choose.

You're a free agent—a blind spot in the visions of gods and a foil in the plans of everyone else. If they could take you out, they would. Of course, they're always welcome to try. You've done enough killing for two lifetimes, and you'll take them all on again in the afterlife if you have to, assuming you ever get there.

Immortality

Your soul slips through the Raven Queen's fingers—or you've earned her leave. Life and death cease to hold meaning for you. More so than any other creature, your soul is truly your own.

No one can forget your name because you'll always be there. Even the gods and primordials must accept your presence in their creation. Some come to worship you, and while you might not have the power to answer prayers, in one important way you surpass them all: Your resolve might keep you around long after time has worn the gods' names from their tombs.

Yet even as you grow weary of thwarting great powers and accepting accolades, you realize that you can do more with your endless existence. You lived two lives, so why not live ten thousand more? With a change of name and an unfamiliar face, you take up a place in history time and again. And with each glorious life you live, a little of the old warmth of being returns. You're not sure when you'll get tired of it all. Maybe you'll even stick around to see the end.

Free Soul Features

Destiny Claimed (21st level): You cannot be forced to reroll any roll. If you choose to reroll when you would be forced to do so, you can make two rolls and take the higher result.

Fate Denied (24th level): Once per round, whenever an effect that a save can end is imposed upon you, you can make a saving throw as a free action. If the saving throw succeeds, the effect does not affect you.

Twist Fate (30th level): Whenever you succeed at the saving throw provided by Fate Denied, you impose the effect you saved against upon the creature that would have imposed it on you. If the effect or condition allows choice, such as forced movement or dominate, you make the decisions.

Free Soul Power

Escape Fate — **Free Soul Utility 26**

You laugh at fate and slip through destiny's fingers yet again.

Daily
No Action **Personal**
Trigger: You fail a saving throw
Effect: You can reroll the saving throw. For the rest of the encounter, you can reroll a saving throw once when the initial roll fails.

About the Author

Matthew Sernett has been a designer of D&D 4th Edition, the editor-in-chief of *Dragon* Magazine, a pizza cook, an onion packer, and an assembly line worker in a spring factory. In 1999, while working for *Men's Health Magazine*, he narrowly avoided being a wardrobe tracker in the male fashion industry.

FORGOTTEN REALMS®

Adventurers of the Realms:

Tarmalune and the Windrise Ports

by Chris Tulach
illustration by William O'Connor
Cartography by Rob Lazzaretti

RETURNED ABEIR, like its eastern neighbor Faerûn, is home to many different lands, some wild and untamed, and others civilized and stable. On the southeastern end of the Dragon Sea, a collection of independent cities known as the Windrise Ports serve as bastions of trade and order among the lands of that continent. This article serves to expand the regional background information given in the *Forgotten Realms® Player's Guide* by providing regional benefits, background information, and new regional feats related to the city of Tarmalune and the other communities of the Windrise Ports.

The regional benefits provided here are presented in the format used in the *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*, but are not the only possibilities for a character's background benefit. *Player's Handbook® 2*, *Arcane Power™*, *Divine Power™*, and *Dragon® Magazine* have other backgrounds available to characters, and this article also provides suggestions and more backgrounds for characters native to the Windrise Ports in that format as well. You can choose as many backgrounds as you like to assist you in fleshing out your character's past and personality, but you can select only one background benefit: the regional benefit listed, a +2 bonus to checks with one associated skill, one associated skill to your class's skill list, or fluency in a suggested language (if listed).

More information on Tarmalune and the Windrise Ports can be found in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide* and the "Backdrop: Tarmalune" article in *Dragon #372*.

Tarmalune

A free-wheeling, high energy trade port that is the most wealthy and prosperous of the independent mercantile cities known as the Windrise Ports, Tarmalune's cosmopolitan air provides a welcome atmosphere to adventurers laden with coin.

Tarmalune Regional Benefit

When you spend an action point to take an extra action, you gain a +1 bonus to speed until the end of your turn. You also gain a +2 bonus to all Diplomacy checks.

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Living Forgotten Realms: The Embers of Dawn

Beginning this August, the Living Forgotten Realms® official organized play campaign will be launching a series of adventures set in and around Tarmalune and the Windrise Ports. This "mini-campaign" is called "The Embers of Dawn," and it serves as a perfect place to start playing LFR or, if you're already involved, to jump in and create a new character.

This adventure series consists of six adventures, releasing monthly from August 2009 through January 2010, all of which are written for characters levels 1-4. The adventures contain a tightly woven story arc that introduces the lands of Returned Abeir and has the PCs traveling throughout the Windrise Ports. Along the way, they attempt to thwart the machinations of a nefarious cult that has grand and terrible plans for the region.

The first adventure in the story arc is called *Stirring the Embers* and will be showcased at Gen Con Indy and available through the RPGA's ordering system immediately following the convention. You can bring an existing low-level LFR character to play these adventures, but we think you'll have a better play experience if you make a new character native to Tarmalune or one of the other Windrise Ports. You'll also get to put the information in this article to good use!

For more information on Living Forgotten Realms and how you can participate in the LFR campaign, head to www.wizards.com/rpga.

Common Knowledge

Tarmalune bustles with activity, and its current population of about 70,000 residents continues to grow without any signs of slowing down. The city is well-known for its tolerant outlook, entrepreneurial spirit, and the ambition of its residents. It seems like everyone in Tarmalune has somewhere to go and something to do at all times, and the city buzzes with motion both day and night. The city is known primarily for trading and transactions, but it also has a variety of craftsfolk and skilled artisans who make a good living off their crafts and repairs. Tarmalune is ruled by Lord Speaker Hamminas Dorn, who manages the usual murky waters of a place that sees the accumulation of wealth as an admirable pursuit.

Regional Features

Tarmalune, oft-referred to as the "Tarmalune Great Port" before the Blue Breath of Change (the Spellplague), serves a similar role as Waterdeep on the Sword Coast for the continent of Returned Abeir. Nestled in a well-protected harbor, Tarmalune has a tall skyline—most buildings are about four stories in height, but attention is often demanded by the 100-foot-tall everburning pillar of roiling fire called the Raging Flame. The streets have no sidewalks and are broad, but are often choked with foot and cart traffic that barely abates in the evening hours. Tarmalune essentially consists of five major neighborhoods, called "wards."

Arendermore Ward: The home of the wealthiest families and the haughtiest area of Tarmalune, this ward consists of many impressive mansions and is the most exclusive of the neighborhoods. Visitors here are often under the watchful hidden eyes of paid personal guards, since the neighborhood's money is well-spent on protection.

Citadel Firequench and the Raging Flame: Directly west of burned-out casualties of the Raging Flame's infrequent but potent gouts of fiery destruction is a basalt citadel where an order of wizards and other arcanists headquarter. The Firequench Order responds with speed and decisive action whenever a trail of fire launches from the Raging Flame onto a building in the city. The order exists as heroes to the populace, since they not only are reactive to the dangers the pillar expels, but also seek to extinguish the Raging Flame through the application of arcane knowledge and obscure rituals. So far, they have met with little success in their long-term goal.

Dawnside Ward: Home to the young, ambitious, and "new coins" (new wealth) of the city, Dawnside is fashionable, lively, and ever-changing. The fortunes of many newly affluent folk are won and lost in the gambling parlors and social clubs that permeate the area. Many adventurers enjoy spending time in this neighborhood of the city.

Copperstreets Ward: The workforce of Tarmalune can be found here, and this neighborhood is well lived-in. Laborers, shopkeepers, and low merchants live here, taking pleasures in simple comforts and frugal living. Ostentatious displays of wealth (which adventurers often project) are looked upon as insulting to these hard-working folk.

Fishstink Ward: Fortune does not favor all in Tarmalune, and most of the city's poorest dwell in this aptly named ward. The smell of the fishmongers' trade hangs in the air, and past their stands, the area can get dangerous. The city's outcasts and bandits live here, and unless a questionable rendezvous is to be made, most citizens avoid this part of town.

Maerhavel Ward: Those that have met with some success and have a bit of coin invested in businesses or reliable income live here. Many tarn-traders (brokers that exchange information for gold) dwell in this ward, along with moderately successful shop owners

and retirees. The area is quiet, reserved, and conservative-minded when compared to the rest of the city.

Tarmkeep: The home of the Vigilants (the city's police force), this small fortress is perched on the rocky ridge at the southern extreme of the harbor. It also serves as the prison for the city. The Vigilants keep the peace without much scandal or heavy-handedness, since the Lord Speaker ensures that they remain clean by hiring out adventurers and spies to report on any suspicious activities taken by the Vigilants.

People of Tarmalune

The people of Tarmalune are known as Tarralune, and they define themselves first and foremost by that moniker. Most of the council that governs Tarmalune is human, and the residents of the city reflect that majority. However, Tarmalune is very open and accepting of other races, and many nonhumans have come to settle here in the past few decades; many of them are now second- and third-generation Tarralune. The more monstrous residents of Tarmalune (such as orcs, goblins, and minotaurs) often find anonymity in Fishstink. Notable numbers of halflings and eladrin live in Dawnside, and they have influenced architectural trends in that neighborhood. Elves and goliaths are rarest amongst the common races, preferring the embrace of the wilderness to the frenetic energy of this city.

Additional Tarmalune Backgrounds

Several appropriate additional backgrounds from other sources for characters from Tarmalune include:

- *Player's Handbook 2:* Birth—omen (usually associated with the Raging Flame); geography—urban; occupation—artisan, entertainer, mariner, merchant; society—wealthy
- *Arcane Power:* Arcane agent (usually associated with the Firequench Order); arcane sentinel (Raging Flame)
- *Divine Power:* Disbeliever; followed a cult (the Scale Seeker House or another dragon-worshiping cult—see *Dragon* #372 or the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide*)
- *Dragon* #373, "Art of the Kill": Occupation—infiltrator, thief

Adventurers

Tarmalune is friendly to adventurers—especially those who aren't picky about employment or who have ample coin to spend. Adventurers that enjoy the comforts of civilized living can find opportunities to ply their trade all about the city, and they might become embroiled in intrigues both petty and vital. The more nature-oriented adventurers could find the atmosphere of Tarmalune oppressive, and indeed residents might regard barbarians, druids, rangers, and the like as "quaint" or "rustic," although no real harm is meant. The only immediate trouble awaits those who were once slaves from one of the other lands of Returned Abeir (many adventurers in these lands share that past)—Tarralune do not suffer those that could bring retribution to their prosperous city, and consider runaways damaging to Tarmalune's reputation.

Extra Muscle: You spent several years working as a bodyguard for a successful tarn-trader (information broker) in one of the more wealthy wards of Tarmalune. You learned to negotiate the ins and outs not only of physical protection and security of your boss, but also intrigues and "fine negotiations." Having seen the "good life" and its consequences up close, you decided that you'd take some of your skills and apply them in another way, becoming an adventurer. Hopefully, your old boss won't hold a grudge . . .

Associated Skills: Athletics, Insight
Recommended Feat: Tarn-Trader Bodyguard

Flamescarred: You had a good life in Tarmalune until the worst of all fears came to pass—a gout of fiery death delivered from the Raging Flame descended on your home, destroying it and loved ones who couldn't escape the inferno in time. You somehow made it to safety, but the Raging Flame took everything from you. Now, your passion to destroy the Raging Flame burns hotter than its destructive power.

Associated Skills: Arcana, History
Recommended Feat: Firequench Aspirant

High Roller: Fortune favors the bold, and sometime in the recent past, you took a big risk and came out ahead. Spending much of your time in Dawnside at the gambling clubs known as darren, you got to know the games well—at the table and away from it. You've always come up lucky when real coin's to be had, and you carry the heart of a gambler even when you're out adventuring far from home.

Associated Skills: Bluff, Streetwise
Recommended Feat: Darren Gambler

Vigilant Informant: After having a tangle some time ago with the Vigilants, they offered you a deal—help them catch a violent criminal in the city, and they'd let you off the hook for what was surely a "minor offense." You stuck your neck out and played their game, but the criminal escaped the city. The Vigilants kept their word with you, though, and they helped you back on your feet and even gave you some

training. You still wonder what became of that criminal. Was your cover blown?

Associated Skills: Streetwise, Thievery
Recommended Feat: Vigilant Associate

The Windrise Ports

While Tarmalune is the largest and most influential of the independent cities known collectively as the Windrise Ports, the others are prosperous bastions of commerce and havens for those who wish to live free of oppressive rule.

Windrise Ports Regional Benefit

You can take class-specific multiclass feats for two classes other than your own, rather than one. You also gain one additional language of your choice.

Common Knowledge

Whereas Tarmalune is everything to everyone, the other Windrise Ports have each carved their own trade niche. Like Tarmalune, the other Windrise Ports are tolerant of outsiders, which the leaders agree is good for commerce. Although each city has its own feel and character, all are fiercely free of rule by outside influences, and the ports do all in their power to ensure that this status quo is maintained. Leaders from each of the cities (including Tarmalune), occasionally meet to discuss matters as a loose confederation when trouble threatens them all, but such gatherings are incredibly rare.

Regional Features

All the Windrise Ports lie on or near the eastern shore of the Dragon Sea. Harglast and Sambral are the two southernmost ports, and both have harbors that directly adjoin the sea. Sambral is the most remote, sitting at a point where the Dragon Sea and Great Sea meet. Ramekho and Imdolphyn lie just inland, along the wide banks of the River Sundarra and the River Tantulph, respectively. Extensive farmlands lie to the south of Ramekho, where the majority of vegetables and grains for the cities of the Windrise Ports are grown. Harglast and Sambral are separated from each other by the Nightmare's Hoof, a range with several small active volcanoes.

Harglast: This spartan stone city is ruled by the dragonborn Lord Merchant Belror Tethel. Harglast prides itself on its stonecraft, and while the buildings outwardly appear sturdy and practical, the city has an extensive network of catacombs, sewers, and secret passages that serve as sanitation, avenues for efficient troop movement, and covert meeting locales. Some of the deepest catacombs have fallen into disrepair or have been claimed by denizens of the Upperdark.

Imdolphyn: Whereas Harglast appears practical, Imdolphyn's structures are soaring and ornate. A wealthy city that specializes in shipbuilding, Imdolphyn is the second-largest of the Windrise Ports. The ships are constructed in vast yards along the banks of the placid River Tantulph, where the majority of the city's commerce and activity occurs. The ruler here, Lord Othmeera Talask, a retired trader in textiles and scents, has ambitions to overtake Tarmalune's prominence amongst the Windrise Ports.

Nightmare's Hoof: This mountain range separates Sambral from the rest of the Windrise Ports, and it is known for its numerous small but active volcanoes. Rumors continue to persist of an extensive clan of fire giants dwelling within the range. There is a wide, heavily patrolled pass through the range that connects Sambral overland to Harglast and the other cities.

Ramekho: A peaceful, ramshackle city that is Imdolphyn's "little sister," Ramekho lies between the River Tantulph and the River Sundarra. Known as the "city to escape the city," Ramekho's laid-back pace and focus on services brings many merchant folk looking to take a holiday or a sabbatical. The city is lawless, and important community leaders often employ adventurers to help deal with threats to their way of life.

Sambral: Secluded from the other Windrise Ports, Sambral is wild, carefree, and a bit dangerous. Tempers flare quickly in Sambral, and sword duels are a commonplace settlement for a dispute. Luxury items such as perfumes, ornate jewelry, and ostentatious clothing are Sambral's main trade goods. Fashion, style, and flair are as valuable as deep pockets here. Recently, Sambral's Twelve Lords (their ruling body) has turned its concerns to a growing pirate threat from nearby Daggertooth Isle.

People of the Windrise Ports

The folk of the other Windrise Ports are united by two common interests—the pursuit of wealth and their disdain for Tarmalune's prominence. Calling the Tarralune "vipertongues," the people of the other ports perceive Tarmalune's inhabitants as duplicitous and haughty. However, they are tolerant and friendly enough to those from other lands. Humans are common in all four cities. Harglast has sizable populations of dragonborn and dwarves (who built much

of the catacombs), Imdolphyn has prominent eladrin influencing both ship design and architecture, Ramekho has the largest community of halflings of all the port cities, and Sambral's streets are peppered with devas and tieflings.

Additional Windrise Ports Backgrounds

Several appropriate additional backgrounds from other sources for characters from the Windrise Ports include the following:

- ✦ *Player's Handbook 2:* Birth—among another race; geography—urban; occupation—artisan, entertainer, farmer, mariner, merchant; society—wealthy
- ✦ *Arcane Power:* Arcane tracker (the Nightmare's Hoof)
- ✦ *Divine Power:* Missionary life; touched by an angel (often devas from Sambral)
- ✦ *Dragon* #373, "Art of the Kill": Occupation—bounty hunter, hired killer, hunter

Adventurers

As in Tarmalune, ambitious adventurers are not idle long in the Windrise Ports. While Ramekho offers the most overt employment for adventurers since merchants frequently seek them out for security and law-enforcement work, all of the other cities have opportunities. Harglast's deep catacombs are often in need of clearing out, since Upperdark threats rise up into the sewers and more frequented passageways from time to time. Imdolphyn's ambitions to supplant Tarmalune create a need for mercenary spies. And Sambral's leaders are looking for stalwarts to take on the pirate threat or fetch valuables from the fiery Nightmare's Hoof. Deals and danger are easily sought out in the freewheeling Windrise Ports.

Upperdark Slave: Slavers from an Underdark race, probably duergar or drow, captured you a long time ago. After spending years under their oppressive yoke toiling below Harglast, you escaped into the catacombs, eventually finding your way back to the surface. Armed with the knowledge gained from living with your torturous captors, you have decided to use your expertise to your advantage. One day, you might return to your place of captivity to bring justice to the vile beings that took away years of your life.

Associated Skills: Dungeoneering, Endurance
Recommended Feat: Harglastan Catacomb Delver

Shipmaster's Aide: When you were young, your parents encouraged you to learn a trade in the shipbuilding industry. You were apprenticed to a shipmaster, a great craftsman of renown in Imdolphyn. The master taught you much about ship construction, engineering, and sailing, but you always had dreams of actually leaving the port and working on your own terms. One night, you decided that you'd had enough of this "mundane" life, and set out on your own to gather tales of lands beyond to tell your hopelessly provincial family and friends.

Associated Skills: Athletics, History
Recommended Feat: Imdolphyn Dockhaunt

Hand-For-Hire: As a child, you were always scrabbling for better things—good food, a nice place to sleep, clean clothes—and you took on any job to get them. Over the years, you've picked up many useful knacks that have served you well on the streets of Ramekho. Recently, you took on work with an adventuring party, and you found the work so much more exciting than your usual tasks that you've decided to stay on with them.

Associated Skills: Heal, Thievery
Recommended Feat: Ramekho Troubleshooter

Brash Duelist: You are from a well-born family in Sambral and have always lived in comfort. However, your temper has often got the better of you, and you were encouraged at an early age to take up a martial art to channel your inner fire. While you absorbed your training with gusto, it only fueled your haughtiness. When you killed a prominent citizen in a duel that escalated from a minor quibble, you knew that your darker moods had become a major liability. Your family ostracized you for your uncouth behavior, and now the only trade you seem to be suited for is that of a freebooting scoundrel.

Associated Skills: Bluff, Intimidate
Recommended Feat: Sambrese Rake

Heroic Tier Feats

The following feats are available to a character of any level who meets the prerequisites.

Darren Gambler

Prerequisite: Tarmalune regional background

Benefit: When you reroll an attack roll, skill check, or ability check, you gain a +2 bonus to the roll. If the second result is less than the first, you grant combat advantage to all attackers until the end of your next turn.

Firequench Aspirant

Prerequisite: Tarmalune regional background

Benefit: You gain resist fire 2. At 11th level, this resistance improves to 5. At 21st level, this resistance improves to 8.

In addition, you master the ritual Arcane Mark (see the *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*) and can perform it without a ritual book.

Harglastan Catacomb Delver

Prerequisite: Windrise Ports regional background

Benefit: When you take the squeeze action, you can move at full speed (instead of half speed) and have a -2 penalty to attack rolls (instead of -5).

In addition, you gain a +2 feat bonus to Dungeoneering skill checks.

Imdolphyn Dockhaunt

Prerequisite: Windrise Ports regional background

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus to Acrobatics checks made to balance and Athletics checks made to climb.

In addition, you master the ritual Make Whole and can perform it without a ritual book.

Ramekho Troubleshooter

Prerequisites: Windrise Ports regional background

Benefit: When you successfully use the aid another action to aid a skill check or ability check made by an adjacent ally, you give a +3 bonus to your ally's next check (instead of +2).

In addition, choose one language. You can speak, read, and write that language fluently.

Sambrese Rake

Prerequisite: Windrise Ports regional background

Benefit: You gain a +3 bonus to Bluff checks made to gain combat advantage and can reroll each such check once. You must use the second result.

Also, when you succeed on such a check, you can shift 1 square as part of the action.

Tarn-Trader Bodyguard

Prerequisite: Tarmalune regional background

Benefit: When an ally within 3 squares is reduced to 0 hit points or lower, gain 5 temporary hit points.

At 11th level, you gain 10 temporary hit points. At 21st level, you gain 15 temporary hit points.

Vigilant Associate

Prerequisites: Tarmalune regional background

Benefit: If you successfully intimidate an enemy with an Intimidate skill check, you gain combat advantage against that enemy until the end of your next turn.

You also gain proficiency and a +1 feat bonus to damage rolls with the short sword.

About the Author

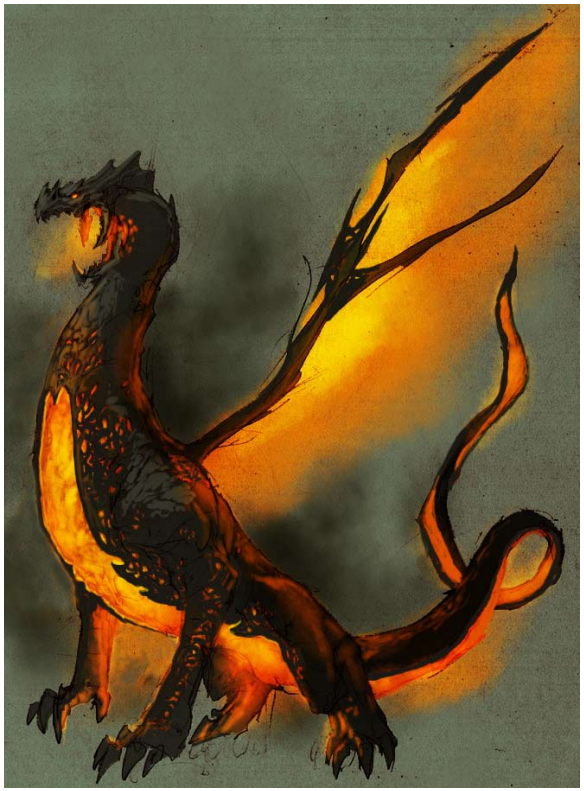
Originally thought to have been raised from a humble Midwestern family, **Chris Tulach** actually fell to Earth in a meteorite-shaped capsule flung from a planet far outside our galaxy. While under the yellow rays of Sol, Chris's nerdity far surpasses that of any normal human. Using this precious gift only for good, he has become the **RPGA** Content Designer

Playtest: Monster Manual 3

Volcanic Dragon

by Greg Bisland

concept art by Richard Whitters



Catastrophic dragons embody primordial forces, from mighty earthquakes to devastating typhoons. Living manifestations of chaos, catastrophic dragons strike with the suddenness of a natural disaster. Volcanic dragons, a type of catastrophic dragon, are foul-tempered, cruel, hateful, and ambitious creatures. They veil their lust for devastation in the pursuit of more lofty goals, such taking control of a kingdom in the Elemental Chaos or gaining revenge for a loss suffered more than half a century in the past. In the end, these pursuits are just excuses to deal death and destruction. The volcanic dragon's true credo is that all things burn, and nothing burns more sweetly than living flesh.

Let these questions guide your feedback while playtesting these monsters:

✦ Does the slowly building threat of the catastrophe create a fun challenge? If not, how do players react to it?

✦ Is the expanding aura too big? Is it too big at some levels but appropriate at others?

✦ The catastrophe power is already involved. Does the dragon have too much else going on?

Volcanic Dragons in Combat

Volcanic dragons are an utterly destructive force on the battlefield. Although they are fast fliers, they prefer to swoop in and fight on an earthen surface where they can take advantage of their powers. A volcanic dragon prefers to focus its attention on any enemy dragons or draconic humanoids. Otherwise, it just sows as much chaos and destruction as possible. The dragon uses its powers to make the battlefield a hellish landscape, forcing enemies to maneuver around fissures and volcanoes if they want to avoid burning lava. Volcanic dragons are reluctant to leave combat if it means showing weakness. A volcanic dragon talks to its enemies only when they can offer it the chance to wreak much greater havoc and consume many more lives.

WHAT'S A PLAYTEST ARTICLE?

A playtest article is your chance, as a *D&D Insider* subscriber, to offer feedback on some new rules that are scheduled to appear in an upcoming print product. In this case, the product is *Monster Manual 3*. Often, this content is still very rough (as in, it hasn't been through editing), and it's always still in the development process. You can email your playtest feedback to us directly at dndinsider@wizards.com. Just be sure to include "Playtest: MM3" in the subject line of your email.

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Young Volcanic Dragon **Level 8 Elite Brute**
Large elemental magical beast (dragon) XP 700

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +10; darkvision
Burning Fumes aura 2; enemies within the aura gain vulnerable 5 fire.
HP 224; **Bloodied** 112
AC 20; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 20
Resist 15 fire (see *fire absorption*)
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8, fly 8 (clumsy), overland flight 12, swim 8 (in lava only)
Action Points 1

Bite (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Reach 2; +11 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Claw (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +11 vs. AC; 2d6 + 4 damage, and the target loses fire resistance until the end of the volcanic dragon's next turn.

Double Attack (standard; at-will)
The volcanic dragon makes a claw and bite attack or two claw attacks.

Growing Heat (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Each enemy in the volcanic dragon's *burning fumes* aura takes 5 fire damage, then the *burning fumes* expands to aura 5. *Sustain free:* Each enemy in the volcanic dragon's *burning fumes* aura takes 5 fire damage, then the *burning fumes* expands to aura 10. Each round thereafter, the volcanic dragon can sustain it to maintain the size and damage of the aura.

Volcanic Catastrophe (free, when the volcanic dragon's *burning fumes* is aura 10 at the start of its turn; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Burst 10; targets enemies; +9 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 5 fire damage and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends). *Effect:* The *burning fumes* aura reverts to its original state and size (aura 2).

Lava Vent (minor/1 per round; recharge 6) ✦ **Fire, Zone**
Area burst 1 within 10; the burst becomes a zone of lava. Any creature that moves into or starts its turn in the zone takes 5 fire damage.

Fire Absorption (free; whenever the volcanic dragon is hit by a fire attack; at-will)
Each enemy in the dragon's *burning fumes* aura takes 5 fire damage.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Draconic, Primordial
Str 24 (+11) **Dex** 21 (+9) **Wis** 23 (+10)
Con 22 (+10) **Int** 18 (+8) **Cha** 20 (+9)

Adult Volcanic Dragon **Level 13 Elite Brute**
Large elemental magical beast (dragon) XP 1,600

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +12; darkvision
Burning Fumes aura 2; enemies within the aura vulnerable 5 fire.
HP 322; **Bloodied** 161
AC 25; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 25
Resist 20 fire (see *fire absorption*)
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8, fly 8 (clumsy), overland flight 12, swim 8 (in lava only)
Action Points 1

Bite (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
+16 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

Claw (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +16 vs. AC; 3d6 + 5 damage, and the target loses fire resistance until the end of the volcanic dragon's next turn.

Double Attack (standard; at-will)
The volcanic dragon makes a claw and bite attack or two claw attacks.

Growing Heat (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Each enemy in the volcanic dragon's *burning fumes* aura takes 5 fire damage, then the *burning fumes* expands to aura 5. *Sustain free:* Each enemy in the volcanic dragon's *burning fumes* aura takes 5 fire damage, then the *burning fumes* expands to aura 10. Each round thereafter, the volcanic dragon can sustain it to maintain the size and damage of the aura.

Volcanic Catastrophe (free, when the volcanic dragon's *burning fumes* is aura 10 at the start of its turn; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Burst 10; targets enemies; +14 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 5 fire damage and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends). *Effect:* The *burning fumes* aura reverts to its original state and size (aura 2).

Lava Vent (minor/1 per round; recharge 6) ✦ **Fire, Zone**
Area burst 1 within 10; the burst becomes a zone of lava. Any creature that moves into or starts its turn in the zone takes 5 fire damage.

Fire Absorption (free; whenever the volcanic dragon is hit by a fire attack; at-will)
Each enemy in the dragon's *burning fumes* aura takes 5 fire damage.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Draconic, Primordial
Str 23 (+12) **Dex** 20 (+11) **Wis** 22 (+12)
Con 21 (+11) **Int** 17 (+9) **Cha** 19 (+10)

Elder Volcanic Dragon **Level 18 Elite Brute**
Huge elemental magical beast (dragon) XP 4,000

Initiative +15 **Senses** Perception +16; darkvision
Burning Fumes aura 2; enemies within the aura vulnerable 10 fire.
HP 428; **Bloodied** 214
AC 30; **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 30
Resist 25 fire (see *fire absorption*)
Saving Throws +2
Speed 10, fly 10 (clumsy), overland flight 14, swim 10 (in lava only)
Action Points 1

Bite (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
+21 vs. AC; 2d10 + 5 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).

Claw (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +21 vs. AC; 3d8 + 7 damage, and the target loses fire resistance until the end of the volcanic dragon's next turn.

Double Attack (standard; at-will)
The volcanic dragon makes a claw and bite attack or two claw attacks.

Growing Heat (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Each enemy in the volcanic dragon's *burning fumes* aura takes 10 fire damage, then the *burning fumes* expands to aura 5. *Sustain free:* Each enemy in the volcanic dragon's *burning fumes* aura takes 10 fire damage, then the *burning fumes* expands to aura 10. Each round thereafter, the volcanic dragon can sustain it to maintain the size and damage of the aura.

Volcanic Catastrophe (free, when the volcanic dragon's *burning fumes* is aura 10 at the start of its turn; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Burst 10; targets enemies; +19 vs. Reflex; 4d10 + 7 fire damage and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends). *Effect:* The *burning fumes* aura reverts to its original state and size (aura 2).

Lava Vent (minor/1 per round; recharge 6) ✦ **Fire, Zone**
Area burst 1 within 10; the burst becomes a zone of lava. Any creature that moves into or starts its turn in the zone takes 10 fire damage.

Fire Absorption (free; whenever the volcanic dragon is hit by a fire attack; at-will)
Each enemy in the dragon's *burning fumes* aura takes 10 fire damage.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Draconic, Primordial
Str 26 (+17) **Dex** 23 (+15) **Wis** 25 (+16)
Con 24 (+16) **Int** 20 (+13) **Cha** 22 (+15)

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Ancient Volcanic Dragon **Level 23 Elite Brute**
Huge elemental magical beast (dragon) XP 10,200

Initiative +19 **Senses** Perception +20; darkvision
Burning Fumes aura 5; enemies within the aura vulnerable 15 fire.
HP 534; **Bloodied** 267
AC 35; **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 35
Resist 30 fire (see *fire absorption*)
Saving Throws +2
Speed 10, fly 10 (clumsy), overland flight 14, swim 10 (in lava only)
Action Points 1

Bite (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
+26 vs. AC; 2d10 + 5 damage, and the target takes ongoing 15 fire damage (save ends).

Claw (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +26 vs. AC; 3d8 + 8 damage, and the target loses fire resistance until the end of the volcanic dragon's next turn.

Double Attack (standard; at-will)
The volcanic dragon makes a claw and bite attack or two claw attacks.

Fiery Fissure (minor/1 per round; recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞) ✦ **Zone**
Ranged 10 (does not provoke opportunity attacks); the volcanic dragon creates a zone that is a rift from which lava seeps up. The zone consists of 6 contiguous unoccupied squares. Any enemy that enters or starts its turn in the zone takes 20 fire damage. The zone lasts until the end of the volcanic dragon's next turn.

Growing Heat (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Each enemy in the volcanic dragon's *burning fumes* aura takes 10 fire damage, then the *burning fumes* expands to aura 10. *Sustain free:* Each enemy in the volcanic dragon's *burning fumes* aura takes 10 fire damage, then the *burning fumes* expands to aura 20. Each round thereafter, the volcanic dragon can sustain it to maintain the size and damage of the aura.

Volcanic Catastrophe (free, when the volcanic dragon's *burning fumes* is aura 20 at the start of its turn; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Burst 10; targets enemies; +24 vs. Reflex; 4d10 + 7 fire damage and ongoing 15 fire damage (save ends). *Effect:* The *burning fumes* aura reverts to its original state and size (aura 5).

Lava Vent (minor/1 per round; recharge ⁞⁞) ✦ **Fire, Zone**
Area burst 1 within 20; the burst becomes a zone of lava. Any creature that moves into or starts its turn in the zone takes 15 fire damage.

Fire Absorption (free; whenever the volcanic dragon is hit by a fire attack; at-will)
Each enemy in the dragon's *burning fumes* aura takes 15 fire damage.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Draconic, Primordial

Str 29 (+20)	**Dex** 26 (+19)	**Wis** 28 (+20)
Con 27 (+19)	**Int** 23 (+17)	**Cha** 25 (+18)

Volcanic Dragon Lore (Arcana DC 25)

Of those dragons present at Io's demise, one group felt not sorrow, but a burning wrath. Io was weak, these dragons believed. And, made in Io's image, the dragons considered themselves to be weak as well. This filled the dragons with fury, and they turned to the primordials for the raw power they wanted. Vezzuvu, the Burning Mountain, accepted their petition. Vezzuvu told the dragons that if they bathed in the white-hot lava of his volcanic domain, they would be cleansed of their weak flesh and given a more powerful body. The dragons heeded Vezzuvu's words and submerged themselves in the lava. Many died during the process, but those that survived arose from the pools of lava with new bodies.

At first, the new volcanic dragons were satisfied, but many soon declared that they had not been given as great a gift as they were promised, or as much as they deserved. They spent their wrath on both the gods and Vezzuvu for a time, allying with both and betraying both. Today, neither god nor primordial will accept a volcanic dragon as anything more than a mercenary and weapon, a tool to be used with extreme caution.

Volcanic Dragon Allies

The perceived betrayal associated with their creation has left a legacy of mistrust among volcanic dragons. Volcanic dragons prefer to ally with elemental creatures, those who share their hatred of the world and its denizens. Volcanic dragons frequently ally with demons, fire giants and fire titans, efreets, fire archons, and salamanders, though they are not opposed to allying with nonfire creatures. A volcanic dragon might take up with nonelemental creatures if they can offer power in exchange for service. Volcanic dragons have a one-track mind, so anyone who can make a compelling offer—and survive long enough to present it—can usually persuade a volcanic dragon into an alliance for a limited time. Of course, tracking a volcanic dragon down might require one to venture into the heart of a volcano or to the burning depths of the Elemental Chaos.

About the Author

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Class Acts: Bard

BY ROBERT J. SCHWALB

illustration by Steve Ellis

Versatility has ever been the bard's hallmark, and in every edition, the bard could step into any role the party needed. However, the cost for adaptability was often too high: The character could cast spells, use weapons, and heal comrades, but always a notch or two less effectively than other adventuring classes. The bard in *Player's Handbook 2* corrects this problem by strengthening the bard's core role as a leader, while still letting the character dabble in other areas through the multiclass versatility class feature.

Perhaps the most interesting side effect to arise from multiclass versatility is that the player directly controls the degree to which his character experiments as a Jack of all trades. A bard need not pick up any multiclass feats, but this will not diminish his function as a strong leader. Another bard might invest in only multiclass feats, picking up those associated with leader roles to strengthen her healing capabilities. Still another bard might opt to invest in two or more multiclass feats, expanding her ability to step into the shoes of other party members as needed.

The Student of the Seven paragon path (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 78) demonstrates one possible way to develop the bard as the quintessential multiclass character, offering robust features designed to bolster the bard's powers and flexibility on the battlefield. Intentionally designed to support bards with any number of multiclass feats, it's an attractive choice for just about any bard who pursues adaptability over focus. That paragon path stands at one extreme, while the others in *Player's Handbook 2* emphasize the bard's other builds or strengthens the class's role as a leader.

But what about bards who focus their multiclass feat selections on a particular power source?

The following four paragon paths demonstrate ways a bard character might change based on dabbling in classes from a specific power source. A Blessed Psalmist, for example, offers benefits appropriate for characters with a heavy investment in divine classes, while the daring blade is suitable for bards with investment in the martial power source. Since these paragon paths require only that the char-

acter be a bard, other characters who take the Bardic Dilettante feat (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 196) can also enter these paragon paths and might find interesting ways to develop their primary class's powers and features.

Blessed Psalmist

"Hear the heaven's song friends, and fear not the evil arrayed against us."

Prerequisites: Bard, any divine class

The Astral Sea resounds with music, from the glorious choruses of angels to the grim chants intoned by legion devils marching to war. Bards weave arcane magic into mundane songs and music, but those who listen, who hear the wondrous music found only in the Astral Sea, can add its unique qualities to their own melodies, blending arcane with divine into a harmonious performance that can move the hardest of hearts. Few have the courage or belief required, making the blessed psalmist an uncommon curiosity within the bardic tradition.

The moment you first heard the astral notes, it was as if a door in your mind opened. New possibilities flooded your thoughts, impelling you to refocus your study on religious theory and history to blend the heavenly music with your own. Extensive training paid off: You mastered the music and can now incorporate it into your songs. Arcane power remains your brush, but the divine is your paint, and the two combine as a perfect portrait of your unequalled mastery over two worlds.

Your spells assume a divine quality, and you shine with astral light when you attend to your allies. Radiant flames might dance about you when you intone prayers you learn, while otherworldly entities add their voices to your own when you perform. You transcend what is ordinarily possible with arcane power and successfully blend it with that of the gods.

Blessed Psalmist Path Features

Heaven's Favor (11th level): Choose one divine class corresponding to a multiclass feat you possess. You gain the class's Channel Divinity feature and all powers associated with that feature.

In addition, you may use bard implements with any prayers associated with this class that have the implement keyword.

Righteous Action (11th level): Whenever you spend an action point to make an extra attack and you hit with this attack, you gain an extra use of *majestic word* for the encounter. If your attack misses, one ally within 5 squares of you who can see you regains hit points equal to your level + your Charisma modifier and can shift 1 square as a free action.

Radiant Song (16th level): You can expend your *words of friendship* class feature as a free action when you use a bard attack power. Doing so causes the power to deal radiant damage instead of its normal damage type, and the power gains the radiant keyword for this attack. If this attack hits, the target also gains vulnerable radiant damage equal to your Charisma modifier until the end of your next turn.

Blessed Psalmist Spells

Song of Radiant Dawn — **Blessed Psalmist Attack 11**

Your enemy cannot bear the bold song you sing and recoils as light suffuses its being.

Encounter ✦ Divine, Implement, Radiant
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. Will
Hit: 1d6 + Charisma modifier radiant damage, push the target 1 square, and each time the target takes damage from an attack before the start of your next turn, it takes an extra 5 radiant damage.

Psalm of Succor — **Blessed Psalmist Utility 12**

Your joyful song calls forth heavens' bountiful gifts and gives your allies a sense of peace and tranquility.

Daily ✦ Divine, Healing, Zone
Standard Action **Close** burst 5
Target: You and each ally in burst
Effect: You and each ally in the burst can spend a healing surge. The burst becomes a zone of healing energy that lasts until the end of your next turn. While you are within the zone, you and each ally in the zone gains resist 10 necrotic damage and a +2 bonus to saving throws to end ongoing damage.
Sustain Minor: The zone persists.

Brilliant Symphony — **Blessed Psalmist Attack 20**

Your sonorous voice awakens thoughts of vengeance and justice in those who hear you.

Daily ✦ Charm, Divine, Implement
Standard Action **Close** burst 10
Target: Each enemy in burst
Attack: Charisma vs. Will
Hit: The target chooses to become dominated until the end of your next turn or stunned (save ends). You or an ally in the burst gains 20 temporary hit points.
Miss: The target chooses to become dazed (save ends) or make a melee basic attack against one enemy of its choice within its reach. You or an ally in the burst gains 10 temporary hit points.

Daring Blade

"The blade is my instrument; your blood is its song."

Prerequisites: Bard, any martial class

In the right hands, a blade is every bit the instrument a mandolin can be. As a bard, your ability to perform, to captivate audiences with song or story, is key. Through your tales or music, allies find new inspiration, while enemies find despair. You can clarify situations with your bold insights or muddy your foes' senses with mocking wit and subterfuge. Just as this is possible through a bard's music, so it is possible through other venues of performance.

Rather than spend your time on dusty old tales or mastering a complex instrument, you focus on the performance with a blade. Your precise stances and a perfect execution of your fighting style's forms, combined with a dash of improvisation, elevate the grim business of combat to an impressive display of physical mastery and fighting technique. Through it all, you harry your foes with dazzling swordplay and razor sharp wit.

Upon embarking on this path, you incorporate martial techniques into your spells, blending the two into a fighting style unique to you. Your forceful personality proves every bit as strong as the muscle-bound fighter and as quick as the most nimble rogue. Through your incessant mocking, your opponents let down their guard long enough for you to slip in a devastating attack. Your weapon is a blur, focusing on showmanship and speed to dishearten your enemies, while at the same time inspiring your allies to new heights of combat prowess.

Daring Blade Path Features

Daring Improvisation (11th level): When you make a martial melee weapon attack, you can use Charisma for the attack roll and damage roll in place of the ability score required by the attack.

Daring Action (11th level): You can spend an action point to mark each enemy that can see you until the end of your next turn instead of taking an extra action. You also gain 10 temporary hit points.

Blade Feint (16th level): You can use Bluff to gain combat advantage against an enemy by spending a minor action instead of a standard action. If you succeed and hit the enemy with a melee weapon attack before the start of your next turn, the target grants you combat advantage until you miss the target with an attack.

Daring Blade Spells

Weapon Display — **Daring Blade Attack 11**

You spin your blade in a dazzling display and then slip the blade past your enemy's defenses with astonishing precision.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Charisma modifier damage and the target grants combat advantage to you and your allies until the end of your next turn.
Miss: The target is marked until the end of your next turn, and you regain the use of this power.
Effect: Your target grants combat advantage to you for this attack.

Unusual Instruments

Daring blades are performers first and foremost, even if they use unconventional methods. In their hands, a weapon is an instrument with which they can inspire their allies. The following weapon is particularly valuable to daring blades.

Performer's Blade — **Level 8+**

An exquisite blade, in the right hands it reveals the path to victory.

Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	170,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp
Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp			

Weapon: Heavy Blade, Light Blade
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 damage per plus
Property: Bards can use this blade as an implement for bard powers and bard paragon path powers.
Power (Daily): Free Action. *Trigger:* You hit an enemy with a bard attack power using this blade. *Effect:* One ally that can see the target of your attack gains a +4 power bonus to his or her next attack roll against the target.

Defensive Posture — **Daring Blade Utility 12**

Flooded with arcane power, you dance away with astonishing speed to escape your foe's attacks, all while daring your enemy to follow.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You gain a +2 power bonus to AC and Reflex until the end of your next turn, then shift a number of squares equal to one-half your speed. Each ally that can see you gains a +2 power bonus to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

Offensive Spin Slash **Daring Blade Attack 20**

You leap toward your foe, spinning through the air, your blade tracing a silvery arc, and when you strike, your enemy skitters back to find someone else to fight.

Daily ✦ Martial, Rattling, Reliable, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Effect: Shift a number of squares equal to your speed. You gain a +4 power bonus to Intimidate checks until the end of the encounter.
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. AC
Hit: 4[W] + Charisma modifier damage, slide the target a number of squares up to its speed, and then the target is marked by an ally adjacent to the target or you, if you are adjacent to the target.

Mythic Skald

"Listen! I tell the tale of heroes past and present"

Prerequisites: Bard, any primal class

The myths told and retold by the people of the world have power, changing the past even as they shape the future. Warriors gather around fires to swap tales about the Great Bear and the World Serpent, while shamans whisper portents revealed to them by the Fate Weaver to any who will listen. Though such stories live large in those who revere the oral tradition of storytelling, they are not guarded, not secret, and any who would listen and learn from them can touch their great power.

As a mythic skald, you may have spent your life among a primal tribe, living beyond the civilized lands and there kept your people's traditions alive. You might have served as an advisor to your chieftain or even fought alongside your fellow warriors, filling them with courage through your tales. Regardless, you use arcane magic to bring the ancient tales to life, filling your companions with glorious visions and unrivaled courage, revealing the deeper meanings in the legends you have picked up during your travels.

Mythic Skald Path Features

Hero's Blood (11th level): Whenever an ally within 5 squares of you bloodies an enemy with an attack, you can grant a different ally within 5 squares a +2 power bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls on its next attack in this encounter.

Mythic Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to make an extra attack and hit with that attack, each ally within 5 squares that can see you gains temporary hit points equal to 5 + your Charisma modifier.

Primal Virtue (16th level): When you use *majestic word* on yourself or an ally, the target also gains a +2 power bonus to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

Mythic Skald Spells

Skald's Tale **Mythic Skald Attack 11**

You sing the great epics as you fight. When your weapon connects, a nearby ally becomes inspired to equal the bold deeds you recount.

Encounter ✦ Primal, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Charisma modifier damage, and one ally adjacent to you makes a melee basic attack. If this attack hits, it deals an extra +1[W] damage, and your ally pushes the target 4 squares.

Mythic Destiny **Mythic Skald Utility 12**

Primal spirits summoned by your recital coax a comrade to rejoin the battle and find glory in the enemy's defeat.

Daily ✦ Primal
Minor Action **Ranged** 5
Target: One dying ally
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, dying does not cause the target to be unconscious. The target must continue making death saving throws while it is dying and still dies if it fails three death saving throws or if its hit points are reduced to its bloodied value expressed as a negative number.

Manifest the Mighty Hero **Mythic Skald Attack 20**

A hero honored in your tales answers your call and lends its strength to your cause.

Daily ✦ Primal
Standard Action **Melee** 1
Target: You or one ally
Effect: The target makes an at-will melee attack as a free action, and deals an extra +2[W] damage on a hit. Whether the attack hits or misses, the target gains 20 temporary hit points, a +2 power bonus to attack rolls and defenses and a +5 power bonus to damage rolls until the end of the encounter.

Resourceful Magician

"A little bit of this and a little bit of that."

Prerequisites: Bard, any other arcane class

Although arcanists might wield their power in different ways, all tap into the same source. By studying the techniques of other arcane classes, you discover commonalities between them all. Rather than seeing a wizard's esoteric formulas as obstacles, you learn ways around the complex mechanisms that allow you to duplicate their spells. Likewise, you find new ways to harness power in ways similar to sorcerers even though it does not well from within you. You can hurl fireballs, assemble magical servants, call forth dread magic from within, or siphon power from otherworldly beings all though the normal routines you perform with your bard spells. Armed with this new knowledge, nothing is beyond your capabilities.

As a resourceful magician, you manipulate arcane energy in its fundamental state. You derive even greater benefits from your diverse studies to let you better emulate other arcane class features. You also find it easier to employ arcane spells, using your power more judiciously so no spell is wasted. You might not have the raw destructive potential a sorcerer enjoys or experience the fruits of a wizard's discipline, but you do have an extensive knowledge of magic in all its myriad forms, giving you an edge when you need it most.

Resourceful Magician Path Features

Greater Study (11th level): Your extensive study into other traditions rewards you with a stronger grasp on their techniques. You gain benefits for each of the following feats you posses.

Arcane Initiate (*Player's Handbook 1*, page 208): You gain the wizard's cantrip class feature and you can use the *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, and *prestidigitation* cantrips as at-will powers.

Arcane Prodigy (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 196): After each extended rest, choose one damage type: acid, cold, fire, lightning, poison, or thunder. Once per day, whenever you are first bloodied in an encounter, you gain resist 5 to your chosen damage type until the end of the encounter.

You may use wands with any implement sorcerer power you know.

Blade Initiate (*Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*, 139): You gain the swordmage's swordbond class feature. In addition, when using this feature, you can choose to bond yourself to a light or heavy blade or a wand.

You may use wands with any implement swordmage power you know.

Pact Initiate (*Player's Handbook 1*, page 208): You gain the warlock's *eldritch blast* spell and you can use it as an at-will attack.

Redoubled Action (11th level): Whenever you spend an action point to make an arcane melee or ranged attack and hit no targets, you can target one additional creature with the attack. The additional target must be within reach for a melee attack or within range for a ranged attack.

Diverse Study (16th level): Anytime you would learn a new bard power, you can choose a new power of the same level from any arcane class for which you have a multiclass feat.

Resourceful Magician Spells

Twinned Spell — **Resourceful Magician Attack 11**

The magic loosed by your last attack lingers, letting you recall it and use it again.

Encounter ✦ Arcane
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You hit or miss with an arcane at-will attack power, or you hit no targets with a melee or ranged arcane encounter attack power.
Effect: You regain the use of and immediately use the triggering power.

Spontaneous Action — **Resourceful Magician Utility 12**

You apprehend the arcane energies swirling about you and fashion them into new opportunities.

Daily ✦ Arcane
Minor Action **Close** burst 5
Target: You and one ally in the burst
Effect: You and the ally each take a move action as a free action.

Resourceful Trick — **Resourceful Magician Attack 20**

You always have the right spell up your sleeve.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Cold, Fire, Force, Implement Lightning, Thunder
Standard Action **Ranged** 20
Target: One or two creatures
Attack: Charisma vs. AC
Hit: 3d10 + Charisma modifier cold, fire, force, lightning, or thunder damage, or 2d10 + Charisma modifier damage if you attacked two targets.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Choose one of the following: Slide the target 2 squares, push or pull the target 4 squares, daze the target until the end of your next turn, or swap places with the target (this power gains the teleport keyword).

About the Author

Robert J. Schwalb contributed design to such books as the *Forgotten Realms® Player's Guide*, *Manual of the Planes®*, *Martial Power™*, *Player's Handbook® 2*, *Divine Power™*, as well as numerous articles for *D&D Insider™*. Robert lives in Tennessee.

Realmslore: Sarifal

by Brian R. James

Illustration by Rob Alexander
Cartography by Mike Schley

The Earthmother felt a slight tingling as a spring shower brought cleansing rains to the forests and glens of Sunset, in the westernmost Moonshaes. Through the Moonwell, she observed a broad weir, gnarled and weather-beaten, standing mute sentinel over a small fern covered hillock. Among its leafy boughs played a family of tressym—beautiful winged cats once common on this small isle.

Suddenly and uncontrollably, the Earthmother shuddered—the minor tremor that followed sending the startled tressym into flight. A familiar ache throbbed in her temple, though magnified manifold. Abeir's waxing always caused the Earthmother minor discomfort but never agony such as this.

Overhead, iron-gray storm clouds thickened and burst into cerulean flame. The cold seas swaddling Sunset Isle inexplicably retreated, lowering the waterline some thirty feet within minutes. The Earthmother understood all too well this dire portent, but how could it be? Had a full conjunction occurred between Abeir and Toril?

Shared communion with other primal spirits quickly confirmed her fears. The Weave had collapsed utterly, threatening the very existence of the world. The ill timed unsundering would reignite the Dawn War and forever change the face of Toril and its sister world Abeir.

The Earthmother wept for her cherished Moonshaes. Yet as disastrous as this catastrophe would surely be, it would serve to stir the mightiest incarnations of nature's power to act. Even now, she could feel the great World Serpent awakening from its millennia long slumber in response to the threat.

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Sloughing off the growing numbness, she sent a desperate call reverberating through the earth. Hoping that it was not too late, the Earthmother tried to warn her children.

Nestled among the fog-shrouded isles of the Moonshaes rests the kingdom of Sarifal. Home to fey of all shapes, sizes, and varieties Sarifal is an enchanted realm steeped in dreams and myth. An eldritch wonderland alive with verdant forests and majestic highlands, some whisper that Sarifal isn't of this world at all, but is in fact a swath of the Feywild transplanted to Toril for nefarious design.

Sarifal Regional Benefit

You gain Terrain Walk in one of the following environments, allowing you to bypass difficult terrain: Earth, Forest, Ice, or Swamp. See the *Monster Manual*, page 283.

Common Knowledge

Sarifal's borders encompass the large isle of Gwynneth, once home to the human realm of Corwell. Those longtime settlers of the isle, the Ffolk, were largely driven from these lands a century ago when fey began immigrating en mass. Within a few short years, the lost city of Karador rose from the depths of Myrloch and the ancient kingdom of Sarifal was born anew. Since that time Sarifal has expanded beyond Myrloch Vale to encompass the whole of the isle, the glimmering shallows along the coast, and the lightless caverns below.

Outsiders see Sarifal as a sylvan paradise governed by a strong yet enigmatic leader—an image the ruling matriarch works hard to cultivate. Those born to the region, however, know that life within Sarifal is a delicate chess match between several powers, capricious archfey, depraved fomorians, spirit lords, and more. So far the High Lady and the few remaining of her kind have been able to maintain the delicate balance of power. But for how long?

Sarifal Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful skill check.

History DC 15: Settled centuries ago by peaceful human farmers and fishermen known as the Ffolk, scores of cantrevs—small communities governed by a local lord—once dotted the countryside of Gwynneth, forming the small kingdom of Corwell. The human kingdom later collapsed when mercenaries from Amn set the countryside ablaze, prompting High Lady Ordalf to expel all humans from the isle.

Religion DC 20: Divine powers have long sought a foothold on the Moonshae Isles, sending missionaries and priests to covert the Ffolk to their faith. This has not been an easy task, for the Ffolk regard the Earthmother as the soul of the land and the guiding force in their daily lives. Even benevolent Chauntea has sought to usurp the worship of the Ffolk, by claiming the Earthmother is nothing more than an aspect of her greater divinity. The druids of the region know the truth of her primal nature, however, and work tirelessly to preserve the Balance in her name.

Religion DC 25: The vehicles through which the Earthmother sends her power to the world, and through which her druids perceive her needs are the moonwells. These precious pools of clear water are located throughout most of the isles, and offer beneficial properties known to the druids alone.

Religion DC 30: The children of the Earthmother take three forms upon the face of the Moonshaes. These forms (Leviathan, Wolf Pack, and Unicorn) are not immortal, though their favored status empowers them far beyond standard creatures of their type. These mortal aspects of the goddess grow old and die, as is ordained for all of the animals of the world. Yet their spirit and the favor of the Earthmother lives on in their successor.

People of Sarifal

The peoples of Sarfial are many and varied; most populous being the countless varieties of faeries, pixies, sprites, and other diminutive fey. Perhaps surprisingly to some, very few elves call Sarifal home. The handful of elven communities that reside here , work at odds to the High Lady and the expansionism of the fey kingdom. The only eladrin of note are the reclusive Llewyrr, living in the remote valley of

Outsiders see Sarifal as a sylvan paradise governed by a strong yet enigmatic leader—an image the ruling matriarch works hard to cultivate.

NATURE SPIRITS AND FEY POWERS

Characters who use the primal power source venerate beast lords and archfey in a manner not unlike divine worship. The Earthmother is the most iconic primal manifestation of the Moonshaes, but other nature spirits and fey lords are prevalent here and throughout the Forgotten Realms.

The Earthmother (Primal Spirit, Unaligned): Despite being called 'the Goddess' among the Ffolk, the Earthmother is not a divine being. Kin to the mightiest incarnations of nature's power such as the World Serpent, the Earthmother is in fact a primal spirit tied closely to the natural world.

Other sources for primal evocations include, but are not limited to, the following primal spirits and archfey:

Primal Spirits: Ouroboros the World Serpent, Magnar the Bear, Remnis the Eagle, Quorlinn the Raven, Amarok the Wolf, and Nobanion the Lion.

Archfey: Relkath of the Infinite Branches, Lurue the Unicorn Queen, Verenestra the Oak Princess, Sarula Iliene the Nixie Queen, and Aurilandür the Frost Sprite Queen.

Synnoria. Unlike the green elves, the Llewyrr have pledged allegiance to the ruling leShay.

Notable Personalities

Sarifal is filled with many individuals of strong charisma and magical prowess. Included here is a small sampling of notable personalities.

**Ate`Niah, Serene Matriarch of Synnoria:** Venerable and beautiful, Serene Matriarch Ate`Niah presides over the Elders of the Llewyrr from the Palace of the Ages, *Argen-Tellirynd*, in the hidden city of Chrysalis. Despite the strained relations between their people, Ate`Niah maintains friendly contact with High King Derid Kendrick of Callidyrr.

Branwyn Moonsinger: Granddaughter to the late High Queen Alicia Kendrick, Branwyn took up the mantle of Great Druid in the Year of Azuth's Woe, 1440 DR. Since that time, she has worked tirelessly to prepare for the inevitable return of the Darkwalker. She has taken no steps to artificially extend her life, and at age 71 knows her time on Toril draws short. She lives in a small cottage overlooking the Sacred Grove of the Earthmother along the eastern shore of Myrloch.

Nearing the middle of her fifth century of life, Finellen is a venerable shield dwarf and one of the last of her kin living in Sarifal today.

Cymon the False: Cymon the Skald wanders the length and breadth of Sarifal with a song on his lips and his signature stringed bandore in hand. He is also known as Cymon the False for this gnome uses illusory glamours to ensure his appearance is ever-changing. Some wonder if Cymon is a gnome at all, but when asked such questions the skald merely offers a sly wink and a mischievous grin.

Finellen: Nearing the middle of her fifth century of life, Finellen is a venerable shield dwarf and one of the last of her kin living in Sarifal today. A hero of the Darkwalker War a century and a half past, Finellen today leads a small retinue of cragwardens; the last defenders of their ancient stronghold Highhome. Despite her age, Finellen is a scrapper. Given any sort of weapon, she will tangle with opponents six times her size without a second thought. Her gruff voice and long beard make it difficult for others outside her clan to discern she is female.

Garbh Lludd: This giantess leads a large tribe of itinerant firbolgs who hunt the westward face of the Highlands above the Shrouded Lands. As Mistress of the Wild Hunt, Garbh Lludd is celebrated for her considerable skill as a tracker. Her favorite prey include stone-eye basilisk, warthorn battlebriar, and the mighty dire bulette. In battle, she is recognized for her signature battle chariot drawn by great elk.

Newt: Nearly two centuries of life has not diminished the mischievous nature of this faerie dragon. With iridescent scales reflecting all the colors of the rainbow and butterfly-like wings Newt is a paragon of his race. Unlike many of his diminutive kind, Newt craves contact with outsiders. Newt travels among all isles of the Moonshaes but prefers to winter in Deepglen.

Ordalf, High Lady of Sarifal: Nigh immortal, Queen Ordalf has reigned as monarch of Sarifal for over eleven millennia. The leShay queen was severely weakened defending the Moonshaes during the Spellplague Years and today defers most matters of state to Prince Araithe. Ordalf remains breathtakingly beautiful and radiates an aura of majesty that commands respect. Her voice is symphonic, with strong chords resounding within her words.

Yazilliclik: Eschewing the timid nature of his kind, Yazilliclik the wood sprite has long aided the

Circle of Druids in their defense of Myrloch Vale. If threatened, he can quickly muster a great swarm of sprites to harry foes in a rain of tiny arrows. Yazilliclik is commonly found along the wooded shore of Mal Tarbat.

Adventurers

Sarifal and the greater Moonshae Isles make an ideal region to set a primal themed campaign. Nothing is as it appears in a land where the fey rule. Sometimes there is a fine line between mischievousness and maliciousness and the fey are masters at both. Shifting alliances and political intrigue are as much perils to adventurers as wild beasts and unnatural terrain. Yet beyond the manner dangers, few places in all of Toril are as majestic and breathtaking as the Kingdom of Sarifal.

Character Backgrounds

Included here are story hooks and sample motivations tailored to a select race, which may be helpful in fleshing out your character's history.

Blood of the Darkwalker (Shifter): Descended from the seed of Malar the Beastlord and the beast Kazgoroth you carry within you the feral bloodline of the Darkwalker. Suspecting yet uncertain of your vile lineage you remain aloof from society, segregating yourself even from others of your own kind. Yet despite your inner turmoil, you are a fierce warrior with a good heart, desperate to bury your dark ancestry.

Fastpaw (Gnome): Your penchant for getting into trouble has spread throughout Sarifal, yet despite your mischievous nature you're well regarded by all. Highly intelligent yet prone to act before you think, your escapades are legendary. Wanderlust often drives you far afield, yet forest animals from your home in Llyrath serve as your constant companions.

Greenbeard (Dwarf): As one of the *dur Authalar*, you are the blood of Thard Harr, a savage greenbeard, a wild dwarf. While the fomorians drove most of your shield kin from their dank halls, you are more at home under the shadowy canopy of the deep forest. You are unmatched in ferocity and the skill of the hunt, and ensure the dark fey pay mightily for each square inch of Winterglen they conquer.

Knight of Synnoria (Eladrin): You are Llewyrr and an elite defender of the hidden valley of Synnoria. You were raised in the secluded city of Chrysalis, where you earned expert training with the lance and the longsword. You are fearless astride your white charger, never backing away from threats to your city or your people.

Violent thunderstorms are frequent in the region, but when the lashing rains and the biting winds have subsided and pockets of sunshine break through overcast skies, the full splendor of Sarifal's natural beauty is revealed.

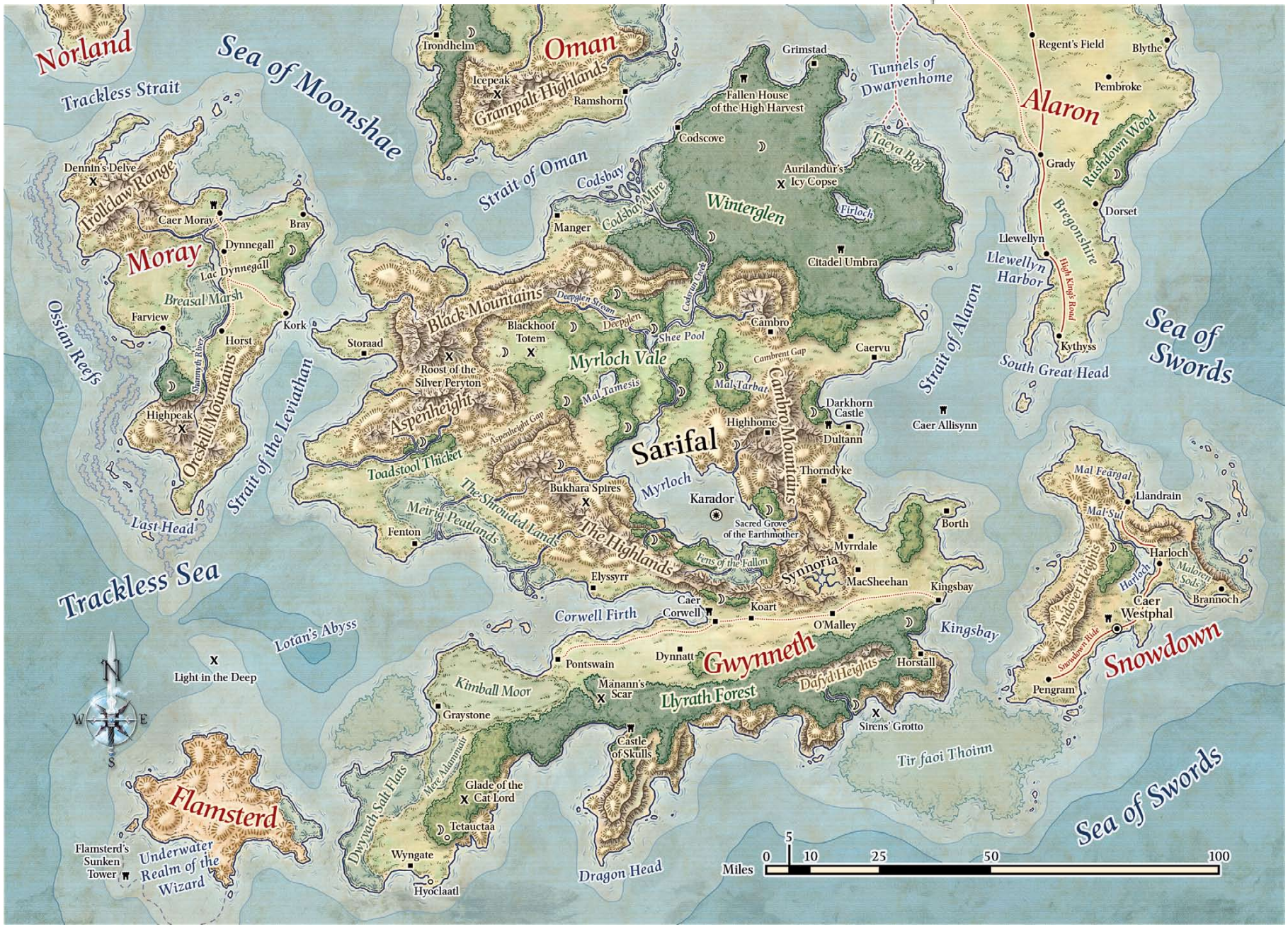
Lashrael Crusader (Eladrin): It is your divine destiny to bring the truth of the Seldarine and the blessed teachings of Corellon Larethian to heathen elves everywhere. Nowhere is the threat to Seldarine more dire than the unhallowed wilds of Sarifal and the corrupting influence its leShay caretakers.

Northman Reaver (Human): With a battlecry on your lips and battleaxe in hand, you live for the thrill of conquest. As an Illuskan you hold the sea in your heart and thirst for plunder in your veins. Feared up and down the Sea of Swords, you are renowned for your ferocious spirit and triumphant roar.

Skinwalker (Elf): Living apart from your brethren, you seek out a solitary existence in the forests of Sarifal. Taught the secret ritual of *skinwalking* by elder wardens, you adopt the form of sacred animals to stand fast against nature's enemies. Other elves treat you with great respect and often fear, as they believe you to be dangerous and uncontrollable.

Totem-Mystic (Elf): As a practitioner of the ancient secrets of totemic magic, you are a master artisan of small wooden runesticks and stone charms shaped in the image of a primal spirit. Inscribed with archaic glyphs, these totems can summon spirit companions and convey special abilities upon their owners. You are considered wise among your people, and consulted often on important issues.

Wrath of the Ancients (Deva): Millennia past powerful leShay allied themselves with the Imaskar, your enemy. With knowledge gained from this alliance, the Imaskari built great portals which they used to enslave the native peoples of other worlds. You are a reincarnated ancestor of one of these enslaved peoples—the Mulan. An angelic servant, you have come to Sarifal with vengeance in your heart. You will bring the fight to your enemy and your retribution will be swift and merciless.


Norland
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Tunnels of Dwarvenhome
Regent's Field
Blythe
Pembroke
Alaron
Rushdown Wood
Fallen House of the High Harvest
Codscove
Taeya Bog
Aurilandur's Icy Copse
Grady
Dennin's Delve
Trollclaw Range
Caer Moray
Bray
Moray
Dynnegall
Lac Dynnegall
Strait of Oman
Codsbay
Codsbay Mire
Winterglen
Firloch
Dorset
Bregonshire
Manger
Citadel Umbra
Llewellyn
Llewellyn Harbor
High King's Road
Breasal Marsh
Farview
Kork
Horst
Ossian Reefs
Black Mountains
Deepglen Stream
Deepglen
Codsbay Creek
Blackhoof Totem
Shee Pool
Cambro
Storaad
Myrloch Vale
Cambrent Gap
Caervu
Kythyss
South Great Head
Sea of Swords
Strait of Alaron
Roost of the Silver Peryton
Mal Tarbat
Mal Tamesis
Aspenheight
Aspenheight Gap
Darkhorn Castle
Highpeak
Orcskill Mountains
Strait of the Leviathan
Highhome
Caer Allisynn
Sarifal
Cambro Mountains
Dultann
Toadstool Thicket
Thorndyke
Mal Feargal
Llandrain
Mal Sul
Bukhara Spires
Myrloch
Karador
Borth
Meirig Peatlands
The Shrouded Vale
Sacred Grove of the Earthmother
Fenton
The Highlands
Myrrdale
Pens of the Fallon
Synnoria
Harloch
Malvern Sods
Trackless Sea
Elyssyrr
MacSheehan
Kingsbay
Caer Corwell
Koart
Caer Westphal
Brannoch
Corwell Firth
O'Malley
Kingsbay
Lotan's Abyss
Light in the Deep
Pontswain
Dynnatt
Gwynneth
Horstall
Dafyd Heights
Snowdown Ride
Snowdown
Kimball Moor
Manann's Scar
Llyrath Forest
Pengram
Graystone
Sirens' Grotto
Castle of Skulls
Tir faoi Thoinn
Sea of Swords
Flamsterd
Glade of the Cat Lord
Dwyrach Salt Flats
Merc Adammair
Tetauctaa
Flamsterd's Sunken Tower
Underwater Realm of the Wizard
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REGIONAL FEATURES

Some might call the climate of the Moonshaes severe, especially during the long winter months. Violent thunderstorms are frequent in the region, but when the lashing rains and the biting winds have subsided and pockets of sunshine break through overcast skies, the full splendor of Sarifal's natural beauty is revealed.

Black Mountains: Surfaced mostly with broken rocked, twisted and cracked from centuries of exposure to weather, the Black Mountains are universally steep and rugged. Barren of trees and common plant life, the only animals that live in these windswept reaches are migratory avians such as perytons, griffons, and the mighty roc.

Cambro Mountains: Once the proud delve of the shield dwarf clans, today the halls beneath the Cambro Mountains lie abandoned, the stout folk driven from these lands decades past by fomorians and their spriggan armies. Nestled among the jutting peaks of Cambro, north of the Cambrent Gap, lie hidden aeries of winged elves—the avariel. Here the *aril-tel`quessir* profess a deep devotion to the ancient archfey Aurilandür.

Corwell: Once stretching from Kimball Moor to Kingsbay, this ancestral home of the Ffolk now stands largely abandoned and reclaimed by the wilderness. The old Corwell Road is still discernable in places as it winds its way past one deserted cantrev after another. Caer Corwell still stands overlooking the terminus of Corwell Firth, but no human king or steward has walked its halls in half a century. Today, this is pastoral heartland of Gwynneth is home to packs of wild moorhounds, and marauding owlbears. Quicklings now occupy many of the halfling burrows, which once dotted the countryside.

Goewin Wood: In the remote wilderness south of Kimball Moor roam nomadic tribes of shifters. Twice annually, the tribes congregate at the Glade of the Cat Lord in the forest heart. There, fierce hunters known as Jaguar Knights bring offerings to their bloodthirsty lord. Few outsiders have seen this self styled "Cat Lord" first hand, but some whisper that the acerbic looking individual is an outcast from a land beyond the Trackless Sea; banished for practicing his sacrificial rites

Highlands, The: Towering 8,000 feet above the western shore of Myrloch, the Highlands stand as a majestic bulwark against harsh easterly winds and storm-driven rains. In places, deciduous forests extend up its slopes, and in the heart of the summer, a vibrant colored collection of wild flowers makes a brief appearance along its length. Trolls were once common in the region, but their numbers have been greatly reduced over the last century by banshrae warriors.

Kimball Moor: A windswept plain of dwarf-shrub heathland, Kimbal Moor is home to a diverse population of flora and fauna. Annually in late autumn, displacer beasts from the outlying woods congregate at the moor for an orgy of bloodletting before the season's first snows arrive. The moor is named for Lord Kimball who established Cantrev Graystone here in the Year of the Stag, 1304 DR.

KARADOR

The shining city of Karador stands as the only known bastion of leShay on Toril—the last scions of the once-great progenitor race of fey. Only a handful of leShay survive, rarely leaving the protective wards and comforts of their shimmering city on the lake.

Population: 2,700. Home to all manner of fey and fey-touched, Karador is primarily populated by llewyrr elves, wood elves, gnomes and banshrae. A small number of humans make their home in the city, ambassadors from far away Imaskar.

Government: High Lady Ordalf ostensibly rules Sarifal, but her son and heir Prince Araithe assumes the daily governance of Karador. The remaining leShay serve as advisors, yet the populace rarely sees them.

Defenses: Karador and its environs are protected by a *mythal* unlike any other. Unlike other arcane wards of its type, Karador's mythal is infused with the primal power of guardian spirits. If necessary, the sentient mythal can shift the city to and from from the Feywild at will. Even if an invader were to breach the mythal, each leShay therein commands individual arcane power greater than the mightiest eldarin High Mages.

Inns and Taverns: Visitors to Karador are rare. Those that gain permission to lodge in the city are typically escorted to the House of Autumn; where they are pampered and treated to the many delights the city has to offer.

Supplies: Diamond Thimble; Omik Twede. Omik is a gnome armorer renowned for his signature *armor of etherealness*.

Temples: No divine temples stand in Karador, though simple shrines dedicated to nature spirits and archfey exist in abundance.

Llyrath Forest: Stretching from Kingsbay nearly 150 miles west along the southern coast of Gwynneth, Llyrath Forest is an ethereal realm of wil-o'-the-wisps, faeries, sprites, brownies, and gnomes. As one travels westward beyond the Dafyd Heights, the evergreen woods become darker and more ominous. Banshees and other depraved spirits purportedly haunt the dense reaches west of Manann's Scar.

Meirig Peatlands: As the Shrouded Lands descend westward the rich soil becomes increasingly saturated and acidic until one finds themselves sloshing through the vine horror infested Meirig Peatlands. Trolls, feymire crocodiles, and bog hags roam this fetid swamp, ensuring a difficult trek for foolish travelers.

Myrloch: Oft featured in song, Myrloch is large freshwater lake; its 800 square miles are deep, cold, and clear. Centuries past illuskan settlers built defensible, man-made islands on the loch, called crannógs. Accessible by coracle, these small islands served as shrines to the lake spirit Eldath. A handful of crannóg remain today, preserved by nereids in service to Sarifal.

Myrloch Vale: Named for the deep blue lake that is its dominating geographical feature, Myrloch Vale is a large pristine wilderness covering nearly six thousand square miles of north-central Gwynneth. A nearly solid ring of high mountains surrounds the vale, serving as a protective buffer against the encroachments of outsiders. The few passes that cross these ranges are hard to find, follow tortuous and difficult approaches, and often present false trails that dead end in box canyons or against sheer cliffs. The northern stretch of the vale sprawls beneath a blanket of lush vegetation, forests of pine, oak, aspen, and elm, interspersed with numerous meadows, each dotted with a blazing mosaic of flowers.

Shrouded Lands, The: This westward sloping hollow of The Highlands serves as ideal pastureland for herds of rothe and wild drakes. Among the rolling hills and verdant heath, Ettins and firbolgs compete for game in this remote borderland. For much of the year large banks of fog roll off the sea and become trapped along The Highlands, giving this region its name.

Synnoria: In a high valley among the sheer mountains bordering southeastern Myrloch Vale lies the elven land of Synnoria. This hidden realm is nearly impossible to locate by outsiders. The mountains that insulate the valley are rugged and nearly impassible. A mass illusion masks Synnoria from aeriel observation, and thick fog threatens to lead uninvited travelers into winding gorges or lost along false trails. At the heart of Synnoria lies the wondrous Llewyrr city of Chrysalis, rising upon a rounded hill from the center of a circular lake.

Tír faoi Thoinn: The idyllic 'Land Beneath the Waves' rests off the southeast coast of Gwynneth where the barren shallows transform into a magnificent kelp forest. Here the seascape is rocky, with spires of stone twisting upward, cloaked by patches of reedlike plants—homes to a myriad of bioluminescent sea life. Tír faoi Thoinn is rumored to be the demesne of Deep Sashelas, a powerful archfey of the sea and patron lord of aquatic elves.

Winterglen: Despite its name, this hinterland of thick pine and silver fir is not as inhospitable as it may seem. Insect pests are rare and the thick protection of the ancient trees keeps out the worst of the biting winds. Here dryads, treants, and satyr stand sentinel against the depraved cylopsian vanguard spilling from Citadel Umbra.

About the Author

Brian R. James is a freelance game designer working exclusively for Wizards of the Coast. His credits include *Open Grave*™, *The Grand History of the Realms*™, *Forgotten Realms® Campaign Guide*, and the forthcoming *Underdark*™ sourcebook. You may follow Brian's random thoughts online at http://www.twitter.com/brianrjames.

Dragonmarks

BY JAMES WYATT

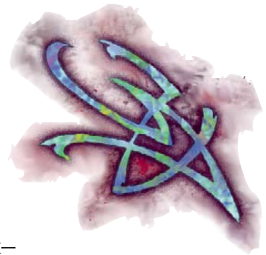
illustrations by Miguel Coimbra & Lee Moyer

Dragonmarks are a major part of what makes the Eberron® setting interesting and distinct from the core D&D® experience. With the release of the 4th Edition Eberron *Player's Guide* this month, we thought it would be good to talk about the design and development that led to the presentation of dragonmarks in their final form.

I like to talk about it, because I think it's a great example of how I see my job as the manager of the D&D design team. The challenge I set before the designers is to continually innovate the design of the game.

State of the Art, 2003

The 3rd Edition Eberron *Campaign Setting* introduced the rules for dragonmarks. In that version of the game, the Least Dragonmark feat gave you a bonus to certain skill checks and a spell-like ability you could use one or two times per day (sort of like an extra daily utility power, in 4th Edition terms). You could then take the Lesser Dragonmark or Greater Dragonmark feat to get access to better abilities. The dragonmark heir prestige class gave you the better feats as bonus feats and also let you use your abilities more often. So you could choose whether to dabble in dragonmark powers by taking a feat or two or really delve into it by advancing as a dragonmark heir instead of advancing in your class.



As an alternative, you could wait until you were at least 12th level and then adopt the heir of Siberys prestige class, which gave you a different kind of dragonmark—a Siberys mark. The story in the world (a story I played with in my Eberron novel trilogy, *The Draconic Prophecies*) was that members of the dragonmarked houses might sometimes develop this rare form of the dragonmark, highly powerful and perhaps a little out of control. A Siberys dragonmark gave you a different spell-like ability, one that was much more likely to come in handy in combat. *Mass heal, greater teleport, and storm of vengeance* were all on that list.

It's also worth noting that we restricted the appearance of certain dragonmarks to members of certain races. Only halflings had the Mark of Healing, only half-elves (not humans and not elves) had the Mark of Storm, and members of the cool new races introduced in the setting—shifters, changelings, kalashtar, and warforged—could never have dragonmarks.

That's the system we designed in 2003, and at the time, it was the state of the art. I remain proud of that work—it was good for its time. Please understand that when I criticize it, I do so looking back on my own work with the benefit of hindsight. But now let's jump ahead five years.

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STATE OF THE ART, 2008

When the folks who worked on the design and development of the Forgotten Realms *Player's Guide* put together the rules for spellscars, they consciously figured that we'd end up doing something similar to that system for dragonmarks in Eberron. After all, spellscars work very much like the 3rd Edition incarnation of dragonmarks: You spend one or more feats to gain these "spell-like" features, but you do it by multiclassing into the "spellscarred" pseudo-class. So you give up one of your existing class powers in order to gain a spellscar power of an equivalent power level.

That's a strong system, and it works really well for spellscars in the Forgotten Realms. The designers and developers were right in thinking it would have done the job for dragonmarks as well. If we had implemented them that way, no one would have been surprised. The system would have worked very much like the 3rd Edition system.

ASKING THE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

As we were getting started on designing the 4th Edition Eberron books, though, D&D Development and Editing Manager Andy Collins dared to ask a very important question: Did dragonmarks in 3rd Edition accomplish what we wanted them to?

Andy was an Eberron fan—he ran two different Eberron campaigns and played in the one I ran for a couple of years. What he had observed was that we weren't really seeing the behavior we originally wanted from Eberron players:

A lot of players didn't use dragonmarks at all, because the powers they gave were much more useful in explaining the dragonmarked houses' economic operations and monopolies than they were for adventuring characters.

Some marks were largely ignored, because their spell-like abilities were even less game-useful than others'.

People shouldn't need to choose a race they don't necessarily want to play in order to get the mark effect they want.

Few people played to high enough levels to become heirs of Siberys, where the powers really became relevant.

People felt constrained by the immutable associations between races and dragonmarks.

Most importantly, the wrong people took them.

In the story of the world, the halfling with the Mark of Healing should be the best healer there is. At the game table, though, the halfling with the Mark of Healing was a rogue who could cast *cure light wounds* once per day—a backup healer at best, but really secondary to the party's cleric (and the *wand of cure light wounds*). Why should a cleric take the Mark of Healing? One more 1st-level spell per day? That might be good at low levels, but it becomes irrelevant pretty quickly. Sure, you could upgrade to *cure serious wounds* with the Lesser Mark of Healing and to *heal* with the Greater Mark, but fundamentally, all the feat gave you was more of what your class already let you do. It was better for the character who couldn't already heal, because it represented an expansion of that character's abilities in new directions.

Andy's questions led us to a couple of really important decisions about dragonmarks in 4th Edition Eberron:

Dragonmarks should make you better at what you already do.

Dragonmarks should all be approximately equal in terms of their attractiveness to player characters.

Because the NPCs that populate the world don't necessarily follow the same rules that player characters do, we don't need to use the dragonmark feats to explain commerce and other effects in the world.

People shouldn't need to choose a race they don't necessarily want to play in order to get the mark effect they want.

ONE SIZE FITS ALL

That last point was controversial, but it speaks to a fundamental principle of 4th Edition design that we've tried to carry through the whole game (sometimes with varying degrees of success): You shouldn't be constrained to specific story choices for your character because of the mechanical choices you make. That's why, for example, you don't need to choose the lawful good

alignment (a story choice) because you want the mechanical benefits of playing a paladin.
In the actual books, we tried to state that last point pretty gently. The world assumes that everyone who has the Mark of Storm is a half-elf. House Lyrandar is full of half-elves; every member of the house who has a mark is a half-elf. In this version of the setting, however, we also really played up the connections between dragonmarks and the Draconic Prophecy, and by default we assume that player characters have an important role to play in the fulfillment of the Prophecy. So if the Prophecy wants to be written on the skin of a changeling or shifter, or even inscribed in the plating of a warforged, so be it—you can choose the dragonmark you want regardless of your character's race.

Where we ended up was with a system of feats—one feat per mark, and it enhances the things you already know how to do. The Mark of Healing feat lets the people you heal make saving throws. The Mark of Storm feat lets you slide enemies when you hit them with thunder or lightning powers. The Mark of Passage feat makes your shifting and teleporting better.

In addition, these feats give you selective access to certain rituals that fit with the theme of the marks. If you have the Mark of Healing, you can use the Remove Affliction ritual.

Other aspects of dragonmarks live outside the feats. Each dragonmarked house, not each mark, has its own paragon path. There are, for example, two paths associated with the Mark of Shadow, one for each house which claims it—the Phiarlan phantasmist and the Thuranni shadow killer. These paths let you expand the power of your mark. The *Player's Guide* also includes several backgrounds associated with each house, which fill the role that used to be filled by the skill bonus associated with the lesser marks.

Gone are the distinctions between least, lesser, and greater dragonmarks. The idea of a mark of Siberys is still in the world, but it's not in the game just yet. I hope to see an article on heirs of Siberys in the virtual pages of *Dragon*® magazine before too long.

ROOM FOR EXPANSION

The system we created allows lots of room for expansion. We can create new feats, rituals, paragon paths, and magic items that require dragonmarked feats as prerequisites. For that matter, so can you!

The key lesson I've taken from this work is that we should never settle for the design that seems obvious. Sometimes it might turn out to be the right approach after all, but following the obvious course without at least exploring other possibilities is never going to be good enough on my design team. I have a team of the most creative people in the gaming industry—I'm never going to let them rest on their considerable past accomplishments without continually driving them to surprise and wow me. Because if they can wow me, I expect they'll wow you as well.

About the Author

James Wyatt is the D&D® Design Manager for Wizards of the Coast Roleplaying R&D. He was one of the lead designers for 4th Edition D&D and the primary author of the 4th Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*®. He was one of the designers of the Eberron® *Campaign Setting* and is the author of several Eberron novels.

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The Artificer

BY STEPHEN SCHUBERT

illustration by William OConnor

The artificer has been part of the Eberron campaign setting since its launch five years ago. It is only right to have the artificer continue to be a cornerstone of Eberron in its newest edition. It's one of my favorite classes, and I have many fond memories of my artificer in James Wyatt's old 3rd Edition Eberron game laying waste with his *bane*-imbued crossbow.

Talking to Myself

For this round of Design & Development, I get to provide both voices, having been part of the design and development of the class. The playtest version of the 4th Edition artificer was initially a product of the design of Logan Bonner, Mike Mearls, and Dave Noonan. I then took over during the design phase of the *Eberron Player's Guide* to complete the class and develop the class features. Then the entire class passed through the hands of the development team.

Playtest

The artificer was the first class to be presented on *D&D Insider* as a playtest. Part of the early rollout was to ensure that Eberron players had the means to update their characters, but it also kick-started our playtest process. Since that point, we've continued to improve our feedback tools and the avenues through which we playtest.

We had a lot of great feedback on the artificer, both through email responses and on our message boards. Those on the message boards got glimpses into the evolution of the artificer's class features as we finished design and development, and I read heaps of feedback that helped further refine the class.

As you can see by comparing the artificer in the *Eberron Player's Guide* to the playtest article, we made a number of changes to the class. The healing infusions received the biggest overhaul, to further differentiate the class from other leaders. But many of the powers were reworked, and in some cases removed entirely. The Artifice keyword and short rest casting times were also removed, replaced with mechanics that already existed in the game.

Role

The artificer naturally fit into the leader role, given his array of "buffing" powers in the previous edition. Like all leaders, he has a way to provide healing (more on that below), and then he fills out the rest of his role with powers that provide bonuses to his allies, or powers that use what we call "target designation," which are really bonuses to attack, damage, or hit effects that apply only against a specific target.

Many of the buffing powers can also be used on the artificer or his own weapon directly, so the character doesn't need to let everyone else have all the fun.

A New Way to Heal

In the initial playtest article, the artificer's healing power looked much like the cleric's *healing word*, with an option to instead use a power that would allow allies to spend a surge to gain temporary hit points. We kept the core of these ideas, but wrapped them around the new concept of "healing infusions."

The artificer creates magic infusions each day that he can use to power his healing magic (two per day, or three at 16th level). He can then use one of the healing infusions to heal an ally or give an ally an AC buff and temporary hit points using *resistive formula*. After each combat, he can recharge his infusions using healing surges from himself or willing allies.

This allows significant flexibility in managing the healing surges of a party. The artificer is a perfect healer for any party that manages to funnel most of the incoming damage to one party member, as the artificer can effectively take healing surges from an uninjured party member to recharge his infusions, and then use those infusions on an injured ally.

To help pay for this flexibility, and the fact that the artificer starts with two fully charged infusions each day, the class also starts with fewer healing surges (although the Constitution build makes up for this somewhat), and the amount of healing an artificer is capable of is slightly lower than that of the cleric, adding only +2 to each use of the power instead of +1d6.

Powers

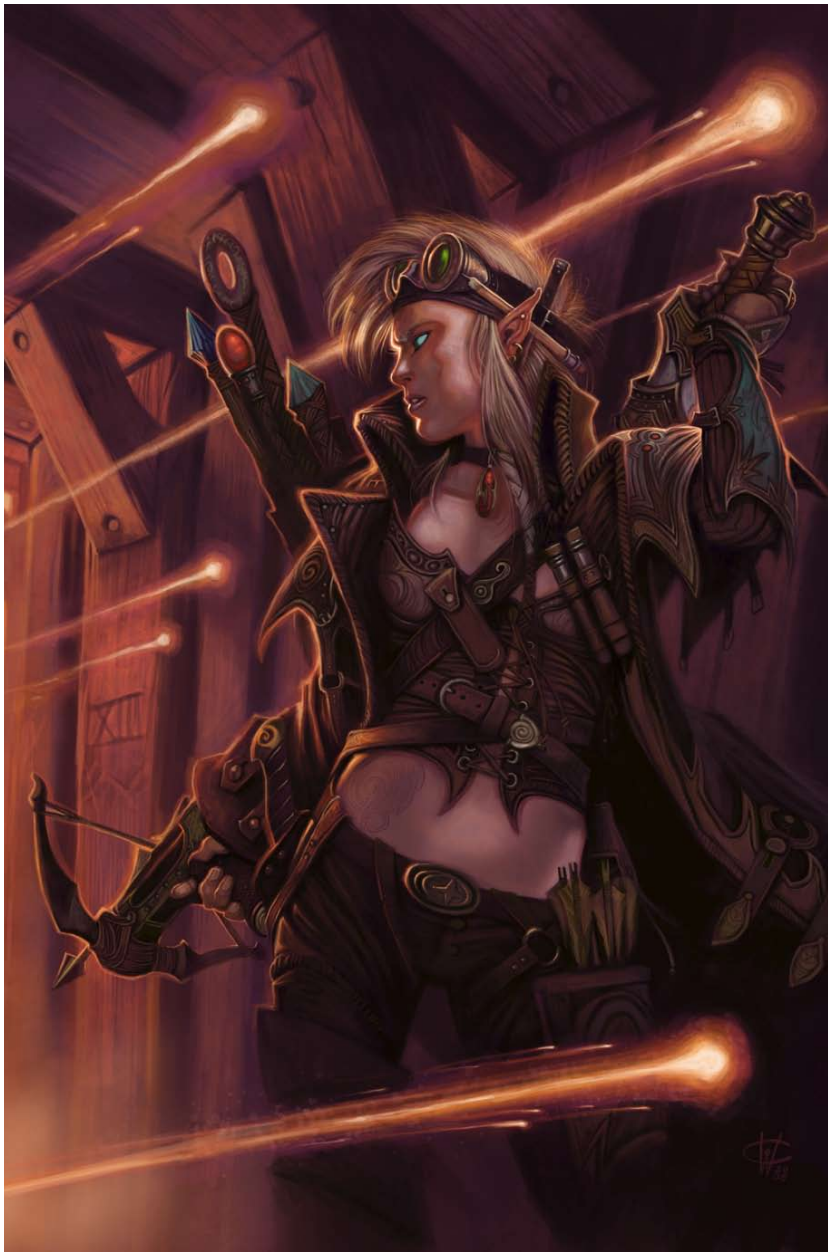
The playtest article focused an artificer's attacks mostly on ranged attacks, either through an implement or a ranged weapon. While my crossbow-wielding artificer wouldn't have minded, I also wanted to increase the scope a bit to allow an artificer to imbue any weapon he wields. Therefore, his weapon attacks generally have a range of "melee or ranged weapon," allowing him to enhance his crossbow, quarterstaff, or whatever other weapon with which he might have become proficient.

Summoning

The early version of the artificer introduced an Artifice keyword, which tried to explain how the artificer might create constructs to do his bidding. Ultimately, we realized that this provided extra rules that didn't amount to enough mechanical benefit. We ended up stripping out the Artifice keyword, and rewrote those powers as conjurations or zones as appropriate (*arcane springboard* is a prime example).

A number of those powers tried to create a living, breathing construct, and we wanted to keep the idea of an artificer as a character who makes little minions. We first tried to do just that, creating minion rules that we would apply on top of the crafted creature. But further development allowed us to realize that we were reinventing the wheel, since we already had the rules for summoning.

After some deliberation, we had a breakthrough on the way we could present the world-context of a summoning artificer: Many of Eberron's most famous magic modes of transportation (lightning rails, airships)



were based on binding an elemental creature to the vehicle. We took that a step further, and now the artificer summons elemental spirits and binds them into his constructs, using that elemental as the power source.

Temporary Enchantments

Many of the artificer's daily and utility powers still provide the flavor of a master item maker. These powers typically have an ongoing effect on the target, and the target can end the ongoing effect to gain some other boon. For example, *bolster armor* provides +1 AC, and can be ended for a +4 bonus against one attack.

We also added a number of temporary weapon enchantment powers, like *icebound sigil*, that use a similar mechanic to boost a weapon's effectiveness. It really captures the flavor of the artificer making all sorts of magic items, and always having "just the right tool" for a job—an element from 3rd Edition we felt was very important to the class.

Crafting and the Economy

To reinforce the artificer's role as a magic item crafter, he starts out at 1st level knowing all of the relevant enchantment feats, and he can even disenchant magic items for free.

We've worked to avoid ways to make magic items cheaper to obtain in 4th Edition D&D, and ultimately we didn't want to dramatically affect the magic item economy by giving the artificer the equivalent of the 3rd Edition artificer's Craft Reserve, or allow for discounts on item creation.

That said, we also want the artificer to be good at making relevant magic items. So we also have included the Master Crafter and Master Mixer feats to allow an artificer PC the ability to craft higher-level magic items. That way, the artificer can always be making the best items the PCs have access to, presuming the party can afford it.

Magic Items

Of all D&D classes, we want the artificer to have a particular affinity for magic items. The initial design incorporated Arcane Replenishment as a class feature to give the artificer the ability to recharge an item's daily power once per milestone. On the surface, it's a neat concept, but we found that it wasn't as appealing at lower levels, when an artificer might not have any magic items that have daily powers. So we expanded this to include the Augment Energy option, which is inspired by the action point mechanics that first debuted in the 3rd Edition *Eberron Campaign Setting*.

Weapons and Implements

One deficiency of the artificer is one also shared by classes like the cleric: The artificer has both weapon powers and implement powers, but not very many ways to use both through the same item. But of any class, the artificer feels like the kind of character who is constantly switching around weapons. It really means, though, that an artificer's build likely focuses on weapons or on implements. We've also had discussions about creating feats or other options to blend the two together, which would serve more than just the artificer.

As it stands, the artificer could still just use a staff, or get a blade using Arcane Implement Proficiency from *Arcane Power* to take the swordmage's implement, but that solution seems a bit convoluted, and I think there's space for a better solution. In the meantime, perfectly effective artificers can still be created and played that either focus on just weapons or just implements, or simply spring for one of each.

About the Author

Stephen Schubert works for Wizards of the Coast as the lead developer for the Dungeons & Dragons game. He has provided development and design work for many 4th Edition D&D products, including the *Monster Manual*, *Player's Handbook 2*, and *Monster Manual 2*.

Contrition of a Full-Time Wizard

BY SHELLY MAZZANOBLE
illustrations by William O'Conner

It's time for this the Player-in-Chief to make a confession. Sometimes, I'm not the *best*-behaved D&D player. I know what you're thinking. I've read the message boards, I've even gotten your emails, and I certainly get my fair share of headshakes and *tsk tsks* from around the office.

You could at least *try* to act surprised.

Yes, we have put New DM through the ringer, and no, he isn't getting paid extra for it, in case you want to start a fund. I like New DM. I do. He's not just a great Dungeon Master, but he's a good friend and he's taught us all a lot. He's been patient, but even Miss Uppity Gripeypants (yep, I've heard that one too—thanks, Mom!) can tell that's starting to wane. He laughs less and hits more. Is it really just lucky die rolling or are the D&D gods exacting his revenge? He recently told me that the group was on the verge of getting a talking-to. Okay, I guess that's really how I know he's fed up.

"With one exception," New DM said, "there is way too much complaining going on. You guys are taking this whole 'you're making rules up' gig too far. It's grating on my last nerve."

It's weird to think of New DM with a last nerve. He seems to have an endless supply of them.

"But isn't that what you guys do in R&D?" I asked. "Make up rules?"

"Not the ones you're complaining about," he said. "Too many monsters to fight! Wah! Really?"

"To be fair," I cautiously interjected, "there are sometimes a lot of monsters in one room. Maybe a tad overkill?"

"And you want to level faster, yet you played two sessions before realizing you were already 5th level."

"It was a very subtle transition between 4th and 5th level," I said.

New DM wasn't buying it. "You're like petulant children that barge into a room, break a bunch of things, and then cry because you got dirty."

Funny, I saw two kids do the same thing with a jar of organic spaghetti sauce at Trader Joe's the night before.

"We don't cry because we're dirty," I began. "We cry because we're getting pantsed by your multiple minions."

Oh, who am I fooling? He's right.

He's not our parole officer or congressman or math teacher or anyone else who deserves our ire and squabbling. He's just a guy who spends an awful lot of time every week preparing for a game he can play with us. New DM has a real job at Wizards. A job that keeps him busy. A job that could probably benefit from those 2 hours in a conference room that we suck out of him. I wasn't surprised he was getting fed up.

"I'm sorry, New DM," I said and I meant it. "I do complain too much."

"It's not just you," he said.

That surprised me. Sure, I sometimes complain about the rules (I'm still not over the whole, *I know three daily spells so I don't get why I can't use three daily spells* thing) but I always felt that was my function in the group. Some are fighters. Some are healers. Some are nit-pickers.

Allow me to remind you that this all goes down at work. Lucky, I know, to call this part of your job. You can't work in marketing without knowing what it is you're marketing, right? We can honestly say we eat, breath, and live D&D because for most of us, it doesn't end when we leave the office. Some are heading home to work on their campaigns; some are heading off to one of their four weekly games. Sometimes I'm convinced it's an absolute dream job. But sometimes I wonder if we're not on the verge of suffering The Great Hotdog Debacle of 1983.

Flashback... It's 1983. My dad hired my best friend Melina and I to man a hotdog stand he rented for a giant tent sale his business was having. We got paid $2 an hour plus all the hotdogs we could eat. Not one to miss out on a perk, I ate about three hot dogs *an hour*. We were there for six hours. You do the math.

Needless to say, I didn't feel so good that night. Or for the next three days. And I didn't eat another hot dog again until The Great Spring Break Debacle of 1994, when my friends and I spent all of our cash on Fat Tuesday's margaritas and conch fritters by day three of our seven day vacation. (It was either eat a hot dog or the crazy beach guy's pet parrot, Hemingway.) Three days after that, I stopped eating meat all together.

We'd all have to make some serious changes to our behavior or New DM would treat us like a pack of day-old beef franks on a sun-roasted picnic bench.

But what to get the DM who has everything except a well-mannered, well-behaved group?

"Hey New DM," I asked, interrupting his real job. "Hypothetically speaking, if a gaming group wanted to do right by their DM, what kinds of things should they do?"

"Hypothetically speaking?" New DM asked, pulling out a notebook. "Let's take a look."

"You have a list?"

"A hypothetical list."

Scanning the list, I was relieved to see no names were called out. Still it's easy to recognize what you are guilty of. Some of this might not even be specific to our group, which made me wonder how many other groups are suffering their own growing pains.

In case your group is one of them, New DM may have some advice for you, too.

In my humble attempt at contrition, I present to you *New DM's Player Manifesto Wish List*. (As paraphrased by me. Which might account for why it sounds more like a doggie obedience class syllabus.)

Do Your Business

Yeah, we leveled! Three weeks ago. So why haven't any of us taken the time to update our character sheets between games? It's like knowing you're getting a coveted gift for Christmas, only to wake up on the big day to declare you'd rather wait until New Year's to open it. We've all been guilty of this. Maybe *real* work got in the way. Or maybe we think we've got too many feats already. Regardless, it's not fair to your group.

The same deal goes with magic items. We'll drag around an undisclosed level 9 magic item for weeks before handing it over to someone. And forget about shopping. Even *I* don't take time out to stock up on supplies. We'll be starving in the forest six feet outside of town before anyone realizes we haven't eaten in weeks. New DM has called us out more than a few times for claiming to dump a *healing potion* down the throat of a near-dead party member.

"Where did you get a *healing potion*?" he'd ask.

"We looted it off the guards we killed in the tower."

"Anwar used that on Maya three encounters ago."

"Oh."

How does he know this stuff? He's not even a mother.

Listen!

So apparently dungeon masters don't talk just to hear themselves. At least New DM doesn't. When he prattles on about things like who we're looking for, where we are, and who we're up against, it might be important.

Adam used to write these things down, but when he left the group we were forced to rely on our

memories or Scott, which is worse because he gets sidetracked in the middle of a sentence and starts writing down all the recipes he can add whiskey to.

"Just once," New DM pleaded, "I'd love for you guys to remember where you are and what you're fighting for."

"Sounds like you want us to channel our inner 80's John Hughes movie character."

"I want you to channel your inner grownups and quit acting like a bunch of teenagers stuck in detention."

Same thing, right? But hey, who am I to argue?

"But then you wouldn't get to do your 'previously on Dungeons & Dragons' spiel," I say instead.

"*Get* to?"

Interesting...

Drop It!

I once dated a guy who was a research tech at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. He'd often leave work grumpy and stressed which usually prompted a response from me somewhere along the lines of, "Buck up, camper! It's not like you're curing cancer!" We didn't last long and not just because he couldn't appreciate my highbrow sense of humor.

Here at Wizards, we make games. Games are supposed to be fun, right? Therefore, one might assume Wizards is a fun place to work as proven by the fact you can play games on the clock. Your assumption is correct, but it can also backfire on you. Do you know how hard it is to leave work when you're still at work? Maybe you just ended a frustrating conference call seconds before your game. Or maybe your coworker blew a deadline that's going to prevent you from getting a big project done on time. And maybe that same coworker is sitting across the table from you in need of some healing.

Not everyone respects our game time, and meetings are often scheduled over the top of our game time, And often, a co-worker won't bother with a meeting and just barge into the conference room waving a sell sheet that needs editing or a press release that needs approving. You can't exactly say, "Hey back off! I'm playing a game here!" Especially when it's your boss waving the press release.

Regardless of what goes on during your day, you need to check that work baggage outside the conference room door and stay in the game, which brings me to the next point.

Stay!

Do people in your game read the newspaper, call their mothers, or take off to run a few errands between turns? Probably not. At least, I hope not. Paying attention shouldn't be limited to remembering what happened the last time you played. It's also about remembering what you're doing in the moment. Don't bring your laptop, spreadsheet, or Power Point presentation into the game. Cell phones should only be allowed if you're expecting an important call. Even if it's not your turn, you should still be paying attention to what's happening at the table. Imagine this is real life, and you and your buddies are in the middle of a bar fight. Are you going to throw a punch and then jump into a game of darts until someone taps you on the shoulder and tells you the bad guys are waiting in the parking lot if you maybe want to hit them over the head with a pool cue?

Respect the Pack

Hey, buddy. You come here often? No? Why's that? Oh, right! Because you're new! You haven't been here at all!

Like the members of a real adventuring party, you can't forget who has your back. Whether you've made it official or not, you have entered into a social contract. That means you show up. *On time*. You arm your character with the best knowledge, weapons, skills, and spells they can afford. You watch out for one another. You share your snacks. (Or at least make a half-hearted offering.)

It's a big deal when you're trying to fill an opening in a game group. It's not just about who's willing to play a healer (which we never seem to have enough of) or who is free Tuesdays from 3:30 to 5:30. The group needs to mesh. They have to trust each other. Your social feng shui depends on it.

If you're the new person entering the group you've got to respect the dynamics. Why not wait a few sessions before you rush to usurp the alpha? Maybe you have been playing longer than everyone else. Maybe you are the most knowledgeable. But not everyone takes kindly to be told right away where to stand, what spell to cast, what monster to target, or how many calories that bag of steakhouse onion potato chips is packing. Boy, people really hate that.

Protect!

This goes along with the above, only according to New DM, the burden often falls on the Dungeon Master. While most of us are playing with people we'd want to protect in real life, it's sometimes jarring to see real-life tensions flare up in a fantasy

setting. Our game is no exception. Like I said, we *work* together. These things are bound to happen when you spend a quarter of your week within three feet of each other.

I think we've all noticed a grudge match playing out on the playmat. Maybe the paladin chose to double move rather than lay her hands on the near-prone bard. Maybe an hour before the game the paladin and the bard were having a heated discussion over which monsters from *Monster Manual 2* were going to be previewed. Coincidence?

Our characters are innocent bystanders and it's not fair to the other players in your game to exact your fantasy revenge on one another. That's what kickboxing class is for.

Praise!

This is my addition to the manifesto, as New DM wouldn't dream of asking this of us. Is it really the job of Dungeon Masters to make sure the players are having fun? The ones around the building say so. Seems like a big job to pin on one person, yet one they take on willingly.

This probably goes without saying, but it's something my group often forgets. The Dungeon Master isn't trying to piss you off. New DM is (mostly) playing by rules. I mean, the guy *knows* the rules. He's been playing D&D for nearly three decades. And yet we find it necessary to question him 80% of the time. Okay, 90%.

Maybe a power struggle is normal between players and DMs, but in our case it's less like a struggle and more like ganging up, holding down, and issuing a massive wedgie. Is it because we're playing approximately 12 feet from the people who make the rules that gives us this false sense of "phone a friend?"

"Since when can't dragonborns teleport?" we'll ask.

"Since forever," New DM will answer.

"We'd like to get a second opinion, please."

And sometimes we would too. I know...annoying.

Contrary to what we accuse New DM of, he tries to be fair. If he's not sure about a rule, he looks it up. And if he was wrong, he admits it.

While we're all sure to thank him after the game, I'm not sure we tell him often enough that we appreciate the work he puts into our campaign. That we think it's nice he schedules his meetings and presentations and calls to his mother *around* our game. That we're grateful he hasn't ditched our ungrateful butts in favor of any number of other groups in search of a DM around the office. Uh oh. Maybe he didn't know they existed. Should I not have mentioned that?

So here's to you, New DM. And DM's everywhere. As Player-in-Chief, I herby declare the month of July Dungeon Master Appreciation Month. Maybe I will bring him flowers or bake him a cake. Or maybe I should take Tabitha shopping, level her up, and learn how to use that level 9 magic item she just secured. Seems like that's something he'd appreciate even more.

About the Author

Shelly Mazzanoble is also sorry for smashing her fist through her cousin's Minnie Mouse birthday cake, accusing Stacy Kendrick of stealing Papa Smurf and subsequently punching her in the jaw for retribution, and that other Spring Break 1994 debacle.

OSO, FOR THE BALANCED CAMPAIGN

Last month, we presented a . . . well . . . less-than-balanced version of Oso the Circus Bear, setting off a firestorm of controversy on the Wizards of the Coast message boards. The Oso Tabitha uses in her campaign is the powerful (but potentially treacherous) version, but he comes with a cost determined by Shelly's DM. The version below, also designed by 4th Edition lead designer Rob Heinsoo, is more suitable for campaigns in which a DM doesn't want to be troubled with a potentially disruptive, vengeful familiar. If you think your DM would be amenable to the original Oso—and the cost that comes with such a powerful familiar—just be sure to run it by him or her first!

Oso de la Fez, Former Show Bear

Balanced atop his ball, wearing his small, red fez, this bear seems the picture of innocence—until he bellows with fury and lashes at enemies who mock him with his razor-sharp claws.

Speed 4, fly 4 (hover)

Constant Benefits

Grrrrrr: You gain a +2 bonus on Intimidate checks.

Active Benefits

His Own Bear: Oso can speak any language you know, and can converse with other creatures. Unlike mere familiars, you can't hear everything Oso hears and says unless Oso lets you, and you would never be able to tell Oso what to say.

Verrrry Dangerous: Oso deals 1d4 damage per tier to anyone who attacks him and misses.

Minis in the Game

BY STEVE WINTER

The use of miniatures in D&D® has changed considerably through the editions... and yet in some ways, it hasn't changed at all.

A lot gets made in some circles about how D&D started out as a miniatures game. That makes for a nice piece of mythology, but it's not entirely true. In the earliest of days, the underlying combat rules derived from *Chainmail*™, which was a set of rules for fighting tabletop battles with miniatures. The combat rules that were lifted from that game, however, were mostly just hit probabilities based on weapons and armor types. The earliest printed versions of the D&D rules have almost no discussion about how miniatures should be moved around on the table. Maybe that's because the authors assumed everyone reading those rules would already be wargamers who were familiar with the ins and outs of maneuvering lead figures through tabletop battles, but it seems unlikely. Here's what the original, folio-sized set had to say about miniatures in 1974:

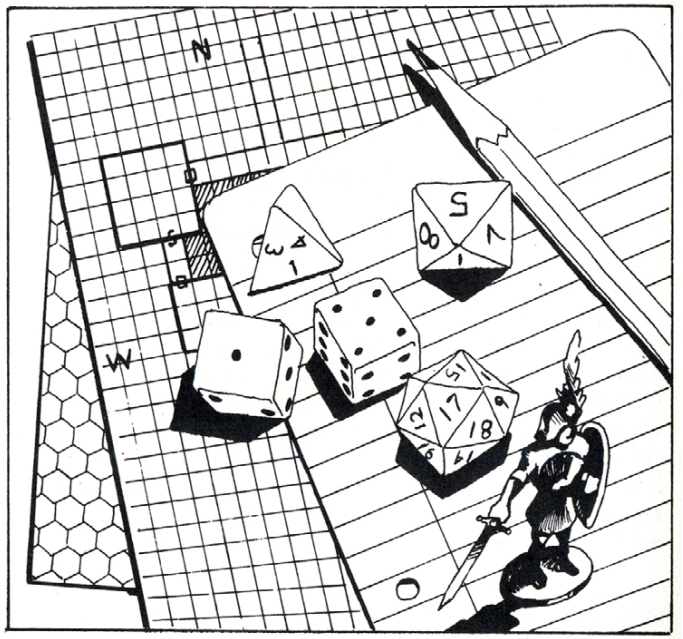
It is relatively simple to set up a fantasy campaign, and better still, it will cost almost nothing. In fact you will not even need miniature figures, although their occasional employment is recommended for real spectacle when battles are fought. (Men & Magic, page 3)

The use of paper, pencil and map boards are standard. Miniature figures can be added if the players have them available and so desire, but miniatures are not required, only esthetically pleasing; similarly, unit counters can be employed – with or without figures – although by themselves the bits of cardboard lack the eye-appeal of the varied and brightly painted miniature figures. (Men & Magic, page 5)

In fairness, the same book also refers to D&D as "miniatures rules," but in an odd context. It's part of a discussion on campaign building rather than tactical combat:

That is, (the rules) cover the major aspects of fantasy campaigns but still remain flexible. As with any other set of miniatures rules they are guidelines to follow in designing your own fantastic-medieval campaign. (Men & Magic, page 4)

The recommended equipment list suggested owning a copy of Chainmail, the miniatures rules which provided the core of the original combat system. Many players found the Chainmail-based system incomprehensibly vague, with definitions such as a 2nd-level Fighting Man's fighting capability being equal to "2 Men +1." Fortunately, deciphering *Chainmail's* arcane combat rules wasn't required, because D&D included the Alternative Combat System. Players of any edition



of D&D would recognize this as the game's characteristic roll-1d20-to-hit combat. Beyond that, the only real nod to the use of miniatures in the game is the movement speed of monsters and creatures, which were specified by how many inches they could move on the table rather than squares or feet per round. In fact, the separation of *D&D* from its wargaming roots is what truly set *D&D* apart, made it stand out from the crowd, and grabbed players' attention. Plenty of games involved few or no pieces—party games like 20 questions and charades, or dice games like craps—but tabletop games used pieces of one kind or another, even if they were just colored pawns or checkers.

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Still, whether they were required or not, there's no denying that miniature figures have always been associated with D&D.

The Basic set published in 1981 (the one in the red box with a cover painting by Erol Otus) stated:

This game, unlike others, does not use a playing board or actual playing pieces. All that is needed to play are these rules, the dice included in this set, pencil and paper, graph paper, and imagination. The game may be more exciting if miniature lead figures of the characters and monsters are used, but the game can be played without such aids. (page B3)

MINIATURE FIGURES: D&D adventures are more interesting to play when figures are used. Metal miniatures (about 15 to 25 millimeters high) are often used, for they can be easily painted to look like real dungeon adventurers. Many excellent figures are designed specially for fantasy role playing games. These are available from TSR or from local hobby stores. If metal miniatures cost more than the players want to spend, many companies make inexpensive packs of plastic figures. These are not specifically made for fantasy role playing, but can easily be adapted for it. Inexpensive plastic monsters of many sizes are also available in local stores. (page B61)

Since there were no concrete rules on how miniatures were to be used, what exactly were players to do with them? Their #1 use was in setting out the "marching order."

FIGURES: If miniature figures are used to represent the characters, the players should choose figures which look like their characters, and should make sure that the DM knows which miniatures represent which characters. The miniature figures should be lined up in the same order as the marching order. When special situations occur, the players should change the position of their figures as they desire. File cards with names on them, pawns, and other markers may be used instead of miniatures, or the marching order may simply be written on a piece of paper. (page B19)

The notion of the marching order hasn't been seen much since Basic D&D and original AD&D. It's important in dungeon-style adventures, where characters are typically moving through narrow corridors that force them to advance in single or double file and where it's difficult to swap positions in the middle of a fight. In those situations, knowing who's first or last in line can be crucial when a trap is sprung or a monster attacks. A scale floor plan or dungeon tile isn't needed. The figures are just lined up on the table in the proper order and rearranged only when someone shifts position in the column.

Was there a place for miniatures beyond the marching order? Yes ... a vague one.

USING FIGURES: Miniature figures are useful during combat for both the DM and the players, so that they may "see" what is happening. If miniatures are not being used, the DM should draw on a piece of paper, or use something (dice work nicely) to represent the characters in place of miniature figures. (page B26)

SCALE MOVEMENT: If miniature figures are used, the actual movement of the characters can be represented at the scale of one inch equals ten feet. A movement rate of 60' per turn would mean that a miniature figure would move 6 inches in that turn. Scale movement is useful for moving the figures on a playing surface (such as a table). (page B19)

Although some sort of scale representation of the dungeon is implied, there's no specific mention of dungeon tiles or floor plans. Many gamers simply used the table top, with no grid, and estimated movement distances by eye. In most cases, how far a miniature could move in a round depended less on the character's movement speed than on how far he could go before running into a wall, an enemy, or some other impassable obstacle in the tight, crowded chambers of dungeons and abandoned castles.

That doesn't mean tactical grids weren't in use. Even in 1981, people were thinking ahead to the days of erasable battle mats:

PLAYING SURFACE: Combats are easy to keep track of when large sheets of graph paper, covered with plexiglass or transparent adhesive plastic (contact paper) are used to put the figures on. The best sheets for this use have 1" squares, and the scale of 1" = 5' should be used when moving the figures. With water-based markers or grease pencils, an entire room or battle can be drawn in just a few seconds. When the battle is over, the board may be wiped off, leaving it ready for the next combat. Dominoes or plastic building blocks can also be used to outline walls and corridors. When using figures, the DM should make sure that a solid table top is used, so the figures won't fall over when the table is bumped. (page B61)

The "Orc's Lair" set of official AD&D miniatures ("The Solid Gold Line") from Grenadier Models, Inc., ca. 1981. This box included nine different orc figures. (courtesy of Thom Beckman)

That last sentence was an important piece of advice in days when metal miniatures came with bases barely wider than the figures' feet. Unless they were glued to squares of cardboard, coins, or washers, they could tumble at the slightest nudge.

Miniatures received a bit more inclusion in the original *DMG*, which had this to say about miniatures (page 10):

The special figures cast for Advanced Dungeons & Dragons® *add color to play and make refereeing far easier. Each player might be required to furnish painted figures representing his or her player character and all henchmen and/or hirelings included in the game session. Such distinctively painted figures enable you to immediately recognize each individual involved. Figures can be placed so as to show their order of march, i.e., which characters are in the lead, which are in the middle, and which are bringing up the rear. Furthermore, players are more readily able to visualize their array and plan actions while seeing the reason for your restrictions on their actions. Monster figures are likewise most helpful, as many things become instantly apparent when a party is arrayed and their monster opponent(s) placed.*

The manuals still assumed that players were familiar with miniatures games and would fill in many blanks on their own. The question of ground scale vs. figure scale was particularly involved.

Be very careful to purchase castings which are in scale! ... As a rule of thumb, HO scale is 25mm = 1 actual inch = 6' in scale height or length or breadth. ... Figure bases are necessarily broad in order to assure that the figures will stand in the proper position and not constantly be falling over. Because of this, it is usually necessary to use a ground scale twice that of the actual scale for HO, and squares of about 1 actual inch per side are suggested. Each ground scale inch can then be used to equal 3 1/3 linear feet, so a 10' wide scale corridor is 3 actual inches in width and shown as 3 separate squares. ... Be certain to remember that ground scale differs from figure scale, and when dealing with length, two man-sized figures per square is quite possible, as the space is actually 6 scale feet with respect to length. This is meaningful when attacking a snake, dragon, etc., if characters are able to attack the creature's body length. With respect to basically bipedal, erect opponents, scale will not be a factor.

In other words, a 1-inch square on your battle map represents 3-1/3 feet from side to side—about the space needed for a warrior fighting with a shield and spear, thrusting sword, or weapon that is swung overhead. This is twice what it would be in actual HO scale (the approximate scale of 25mm miniatures), where a 1-inch square on the tabletop represents 6 feet. As noted, that doesn't matter when you're fighting other creatures that stand and fight the way you do. The difference between figure scale and ground scale becomes critical when fighting a creature that stretches out on the floor, such as a snakelike dragon, because the dragon's snaky body is sculpted at a scale of 1 inch = 6 feet, not 1 inch = 3 1/3 feet. The answer is to mentally adjust the ground scale, crowd 1.8 human-sized figures into a 1-inch square, and ... problem solved! If the giant snake is accompanied by a squad of 11-foot-tall ogres—well, maybe it's best to just not go there.

This doesn't even tap the questions that arose when the action left the dungeon and headed outdoors, where all ranges and movement distances (but not spell areas of effect) were tripled by converting scale measurements from feet to yards. If your dungeon battles used a ground scale of 1 inch = 3-1/3 feet, then your outdoor battles would use a ground scale of 1 inch = 3-1/3 yards, or 10 feet. But then, what did the *Players Handbook* mean when it stated on page 39 that "Outdoors, 1" equals 10 yards. Indoors, 1" equals 10 feet." That statement implied that the standard underground scale was 1 inch = 10 feet, not the 1 inch = 6 feet which would be true HO scale or the 1 inch = 3-1/3 feet that the *DMG* promoted for tactical encounters.

The explanation is that the statement on page 39 of the *Player's Handbook* referred to scale inches as they were used on the ranged weapon table and in spell descriptions. Those scale inches were different from the HO scale inches of the figures and the ground scale inches discussed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

If you're confused, you're in good company.

The sizes of "25mm" miniatures has slowly but steadily crept upward since the early days. Shown are three otyughs –the first from TSR's AD&D line ca. 1983, the

second from WotC's Chainmail line circa 2002, and the third from WotC's D&D Miniatures pre-painted plastic line circa 2007. (courtesy of Steve Winter and Stephen Radney-MacFarland)

When 2nd Edition AD&D arrived in 1989, most of that confusion was eliminated. The game dispensed with "scale inches" entirely. Move distances, ranges, and areas of effect were described in "real world" feet and yards. Players who used miniatures with a gridded battle mat needed to mentally convert all those distances to grid squares. Most of the distances were divisible by 10, however, so if you used a grid scale of 1 square = 5 or 10 feet, the math was quick and easy.

Miniatures in general were played down in 2nd Edition to a greater extent than in any other edition. Their only mention came on page 10 of the *Player's Handbook*®, which stated:

Miniature figures are handy for keeping track of where everyone is in a confusing situation like a battle. These can be as elaborate or simple as you like. Some players use miniature lead or pewter figures painted to resemble their characters. Plastic soldiers, chess pieces, boardgame pawns, dice, or bits of paper can work just as well.

Miniatures rose to prominence again in 3rd Edition. Ranges and movements were standardized to mesh with a 5-feet-per-square grid. Movement, line of sight, and areas of effect were defined in terms of that grid. There were even diagrams showing how everything worked together! For the first time in (at that point) the over 25-year history of D&D, people who wanted to use miniatures in their games were provided with movement and combat rules that were written with miniatures in mind. It's no coincidence that the Chainmail name was resurrected for both a line of miniature figures and a set of miniatures battle rules to accompany 3rd Edition. With the introduction of the current line of pre-painted plastic D&D figures, attractive, properly-scaled miniatures are finally within reach of every D&D player and DM, regardless of their painting abilities or math skills. Even better, 4th Edition incorporates miniatures into D&D combat in ways that make using them not just easy but enormously fun.

About the Author

Steve Winter has wasted approximately three-fifths of his moderately long life, and the entirety of his professional career, in service to D&D® in one form or another. The rest of the time was invested blissfully staring at clouds, playing tag, reading comics, and painting miniatures.

Summer Events Heat Up

BY CHRIS TULACH

illustrations by Eric L. Williams

May has come and gone, and now we're diving into the busy summer convention season. Last month was a busy one around here, so we'll start with some updates on recent goings on in Organized Play, then we'll talk some more about the Ultimate Dungeon Delve, premiering at Origins this month!

Monster Manual 2 Game Day a Success!

Despite being on the US Memorial Day weekend, we had an excellent turnout for *Monster Manual*® 2 Game Day. Our feedback on the event was also positive—players really liked the opportunity to fight some new critters and do battle with a returned nemesis, the rust monster. In addition, we received a lot of feedback expressing that we got the level "right" this time, so look for future Game Days to continue to focus on heroic-tier play (levels 1-10). Next up in September is *Dungeon Master's Guide*® 2 Game Day, where you'll experience a new play format for the event as we spotlight a team adventure-building activity. Keep an eye on www.dndgameday.com for more information soon!

My Realms Adventure Now Available

The first in a series of customizable adventure templates meant to expand your group's *Living Forgotten Realms*® experience is now available! The first adventure packet has everything you need to get started on creating your own LFR-compatible adventure to run for your home group or show off your creativity to others. This one, coded *MYRE1-1*, is for characters levels 1–4. More My Realms adventure templates are on their way soon. To schedule a game and get the

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packet, login to your profile and select it from the list of adventures when you schedule your event. Then, read through the material in the adventure packet and start creating!

It Takes a Village … DM Rewards Program Launches With a Bang

The all-new, all-awesome DM Rewards program sent out its first annual mailing to all members this past month. Arriving in mailboxes all over the world was a 4th Edition take on the classic adventure *The Village of Hommlet*. This 24-page adventure contains information on the classic locale that served as a launch point into the dreaded Temple of Elemental Evil, including stats on your favorite NPCs and a full-color, double-sided poster map detailing the first floor of the Inn of the Welcome Wench and the Moathouse!

The D&D community has had a very positive reaction to this classic adventure, and fans all over are wondering how to get it. Well, it's still available, it's free, and it's easy to obtain. Simply get a DCI/RPGA number and then head over to the DM Rewards page to read more about the program and how to sign up. Our next scheduled mailing is in August, and if you sign up by June 30, you'll get a copy of this great adventure written by Andy Collins and inspired by the original Gary Gygax module! If you sign up later on in the summer, don't worry—we'll still ship one to you during our November mailing.

Ship Ahoy! Exclusive Tile Sheet for Active DMs

Our great DM Rewards don't stop with our annual adventure. DMs that have done at least five sessions of reported DMing by June 30 will receive the first "activity" mailing for our new program in August. What's up this time around? A great-looking exclusive tile that has a number of different ships on it, including below decks for the largest one! Each DM that qualifies for the reward will receive two copies of this ship tile sheet, so you can have a ship-to-ship combat or portray both above and below decks on your gaming table at one time.

Ultimate Dungeon Delve Details

Last month, we teased a bit about the Ultimate Dungeon Delve. Now here's the rest that you need to know!

The Ultimate Dungeon Delve will be running at select conventions this summer. These conventions are listed below.

Character Creation

In order to participate in the Ultimate Dungeon Delve, you need to create a character for it. The character must be created with the D&D Insider Character Builder and must be printed on the character sheet from that program. Use the 22-point-buy system for your character's statistics. Anything that is a legal option in the Character Builder is legal for play. The character must be 6th level and can have the following magic items: one (1) 7th-level magic item; one (1) 6th-level magic item; and one (1) 5th-

Convention	*Location*	*Date*	*Adventure*
Origins	Columbus, OH	June 25-28	The Lunar Awakening
San Diego Comic-Con	San Diego, CA	July 23-26	The Lunar Awakening
Gen Con Indy	Indianapolis, IN	August 13-16	Fall of the Tower at Windrock
PAX	Seattle, WA	September 4-6	Fall of the Tower at Windrock
Gen Con Australia	Brisbane, Queensland	September 17-20	Fall of the Tower at Windrock

level magic item. In addition, you have 1,000 gold pieces (gp) to spend on additional gear or other magic items. You may purchase a maximum of two (2) consumables (potions, one-use magic items, alchemical items, etc.) for your character. Consumables purchased may not be higher than 10th level.

(This information has been added to version 1.9 of the RPGA Character Creation Guide, which can be obtained via the RPGA downloads page.)

Make certain you bring your printed character sheet with you to the event! We will have only a limited number of stations open for people to use the Character Builder on-site, so you'll want to ensure you're prepared for your event.

Adventure Play Specifics

The Ultimate Dungeon Delve is an endurance test, whereby you and your team attempt to finish six encounters without taking an extended rest. Here are the rules for play:

Your team consists of five players, each with one 6th-level character created according to the rules listed above. You will need to provide the DM with the name of your team when you sit down and get ready to play.

You will have 45 minutes to complete each encounter from the time the DM starts the clock. Once you finish one encounter and tell the DM you are ready to begin the next one, the timer will begin on the next encounter. Fast play and quick decision-making are critical to completing an encounter within the allotted time. The clock will always be ticking from the time you begin play, so be sure to monitor it.

Your group may take short rests between encounters when possible but may not take an extended rest at any point during the Ultimate Dungeon Delve. Deliberation during a short rest counts during your game time for either the encounter you've just completed or your next one, depending on the team's decision.

Characters that die during the Ultimate Dungeon Delve are out of play. You may take a fallen comrade's gear with you during the remainder of the adventure. Players that have a dead character may not help the other players for the remainder of the adventure, but they may continue to observe. Players of dead characters are still rewarded if the team manages to complete the Ultimate Dungeon Delve.

Your team is eliminated from the Ultimate Dungeon Delve if any one of the following occurs: your characters take an extended rest, all the characters are killed, the team decides by majority vote to stop play, or time runs out before an encounter is finished.

Prizes

Teams that successfully complete all six encounters within the allotted time will each receive copies of new D&D® game product and will have their characters placed in the Ultimate Dungeon Delve Hall of Fame!

Adventure Descriptions

There are two adventures for this season's Ultimate Dungeon Delve. The first, *The Lunar Awakening*, plays at Origins and San Diego Comic-Con. The second adventure, *Fall of the Tower at Windrock*, plays at Gen Con Indy, PAX, and Gen Con Australia. The descriptions for each are listed below.

The Lunar Awakening

The howls grew louder and louder until one night they were upon us. The myths and stories, they were all true. The primal urges of our people were too strong for the old apothecary's snake oil. But there's more; more dread I dare say. Someone or something is awaking the victims of these bestial men, to walk the earth again as living dead! How can we stop them? Who can help us overcome the Lunar Awakening? An Ultimate Dungeon Delve adventure for five 6th-level characters.

Fall of the Tower at Windrock

The enigmatic wizard, Kelleck, once built a magnificent tower on an earthmote above a verdant island realm as a beacon of hope to the villages of Windrock below. Now, word has reached far and wide that the tower has crumbled, and whispers of the wizard's demise have reached the ears of many adventurers. What has become of Kelleck, and who now will keep the villages safe? An Ultimate Dungeon Delve adventure for five 6th-level characters.

New Living Forgotten Realms Adventures Releasing This Month

Check out the latest adventure offerings from D&D Organized Play!

June 3, 2009

AGLA1-4 Through Twilight Boughs

The Tome of Twilight Boughs is a legendary book of powerful ancient Yuir rituals protected by cryptic magic. The tome, or a copy of it, has recently been found. A half-elf scholar believes he has decoded a portion of it and now invites adventurers to help verify his findings. But how exactly does one verify the contents of a book over 2,000 years old? This adventure is the second part of the Tome of Twilight Boughs major quest, which began in *AGLA1-1 Lost Temple of the Fey Gods*. A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in Aglarond for characters levels 4–7.

June 10, 2009

CORE1-10 Dancing Shadows

On most occasions, the trip from the ruins of Spellgard back to civilization is reasonably safe. But what happens when the road is more dangerous than expected—especially when shadows bite? First part of *Bane of Shadows* trilogy. A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in the Fallen Lands for characters levels 4–7.

June 17, 2009

DRAG1-4 Falling Snow, White Petal

Master Fan-Ji has a problem and needs the help of professionals who value the arts of discretion and diplomacy but can also pack a decent punch when those fail ... and if you can keep a stubborn mule under control, that would be handy too! A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in Dragon Coast for characters levels 4–7.

June 24, 2009

BALD1-4 Silent Streets and Vanished Souls

A distraught father has gotten no satisfaction from the city authorities of Baldur's Gate, so he turns to sellswords in the hope of finding his lost daughter. The truth of her disappearance may reveal dark secrets from the city's past—secrets that those on both sides of the law would kill to protect. A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in Baldur's Gate for characters levels 1–4.

AKAN1-4 Runes in Ruins

When the Spellplague brought Akanûl to the Realms, many items were shattered and lost. Pieces of something are now surfacing, and it is imperative that the government of Akanûl finds it before anyone else. A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in Akanûl for characters levels 4–7.

About the Author

Originally thought to have been raised from a humble Midwestern family, **Chris Tulach** actually fell to Earth in a meteorite-shaped capsule flung from a planet far outside our galaxy. While under the yellow rays of Sol, Chris's nerdity far surpasses that of any normal human. Using this precious gift only for good, he has become the **RPGA** Content Designer.

Monster Month

BY BILL SLAVICSEK

This time out, I have a bunch of news to pass along. The memos and secret files have been piling up on my desk, and I want to let you in on some of the things we're rolling out in the very near future. I'm going to provide the inside scoop on some exclusive-to-D&D-Insider material appearing this month and later this summer, the new debut content plan that kicks off next month, and the newest update to the D&D Character Builder and D&D Compendium. Finally, I want to bring you up to speed about our slate of seminars for GenCon this year. So let's get this show on the road!

Exclusive D&DI Race ...

This month, we kick off a new rollout of exclusive material for the Dungeons & Dragons® game that you can only get as a *D&D Insider* subscriber. This exclusive material won't appear in any core rulebooks or supplements, but it will be totally official and ready to use if you're a *D&D Insider* subscriber. We start out with the revenant, a new player character race that I predict is going to be all the rage. The revenant is an undead creature who could have been of any other race in life but returns after death as a revenant with a new life and a new purpose. With a connection to the Raven Queen, vague memories of past lives, and some cool undead powers, the revenant provides great opportunities for roleplaying and new approaches to character death ... because for the revenant, death is only the beginning! Look for the revenant player character race on June 15, exclusively available to D&D Insiders.

... and Class!

It doesn't end there, however. We have more exclusive content on the way, including a new character class available only to D&D Insiders. Wait for it ... coming in September ... the original class designed for player characters who wanted to embrace the dark side of being a hero ... get ready for the assassin! Mike Mearls is putting the finishing touches on the design of this exciting new class (and the new power source it is associated with) even as I type this, and then it will go through the usual development and editing cycle before it shows up for every D&D Insider to use.

A race and a class, the revenant and the assassin. Exclusive material for your D&D game, available only to *D&D Insider* subscribers. And there's more to come! Watch this space and our usual news items and editorials for additional exclusive material announcements later this summer.

Player's Handbook 3 Debut Content

We recently announced that debut content was coming to *D&D Insider*. As a D&D Insider, you're going to start receiving fully developed and edited, ready-to-publish material from key 2010 titles way ahead of their official publication dates. This isn't playtest material. It isn't half-finished, partially formed, sneak peeks. Nope. It's just like what appears in every physical product we produce. What's the difference? The difference is that, because you're a D&D Insider, we want you to be able to start playing with this material right now. That's the same kind of access to new stuff that we get here in R&D. What could be more Insider than that?

This debut content, which becomes available on *D&D Insider* up to a year before it sees physical publication, populates the D&D Character Builder and the D&D Compendium, making it immediately useful in play. That's huge. We're starting out by debuting key material from next year's biggest physical product, *Player's Handbook® 3*. As a *D&D Insider*, you're going to get to start playing with the psionic power source way earlier than the rest of the D&D gaming world. In July, the psion player character class debuts, complete and fully loaded in theD&D Character Builder so you can dive right in and start making psion characters for your next game session.

Starting in July and continuing each month until the release of the physical book next March, we'll roll out distinct and complete chunks of the book. By the time the book sees print, D&D Insiders will have gotten over 100 pages of material early. That's about 50 percent of the book. You're going to see one build

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from up to five new classes, a few new races, feats, and other surprises from *Player's Handbook* 3. And that's only the beginning. Later this summer, we'll start rolling out debut content from a second key 2010 title, continually building and expanding the program as the year progresses. This is exciting stuff, and almost instant gratification for the creative teams here at D&D R&D. After all, in the Old Days, stuff we worked on wouldn't see the light of day for months if not years after we finished working on it. Now, for this debut content, that delay will be much, much less.

Dragon Annual

In September, we release our first *Dragon*® *Annual*, which collects some of the best material to appear in the online version of *Dragon* magazine over the past year. I won't spoil it by telling you which articles made the cut, but here's a list of the credits for everything between the very attractive hardbound covers: Logan Bonner, Bruce R. Cordell, Brian R. James, Ari Marmell, Mike Mearls, Robert J. Schwalb, Chris Sims, and Rodney Thompson. Feel free to start making guesses now!

Gen Con Preview

Yup, I and members of my R&D team will be at Gen Con this August. Feel free to say hello and let us know that you're a D&D Insider, and maybe we'll share a secret or two with you at the show. I do know that I'm going to reveal the 2010 campaign setting at Gen Con. Right after I make that announcement, we'll get word out immediately to all the D&D Insiders who couldn't make the trip. If you are at the show, come by and participate in one or more of our seminars. Here's the full list.

D&D Organized Play Update and RPGA Members Meeting

If you're interested in participating in one of our official Organized Play programs and want the scoop on how to join, stop by to get information on all of our existing programs and hear about our upcoming offerings. From Worldwide D&D Game Day to D&D Delve Night to Living Forgotten Realms (and all points in-between), we'll give you the lowdown and status of all of our current programs. This seminar will also serve as the RPGA Members' Meeting. **Thu 10 AM**

The D&D World of Eberron

Join members of Wizard's R&D team, *D&D Insider*, and novel authors to discuss the latest happenings in the **Eberron**® campaign setting. Secrets and upcoming events will be revealed! **Thu 2 PM**

Design and Development: Presented by D&D Insider

The popular *Dragon* magazine column leaps out of the web and onto center stage for this rousing debate on the nuances of D&D game design with members of Wizard's R&D team. Audience participation guaranteed! **Thu 4 PM**

Organizing Games for Wizards of the Coast

If you love playing our games but want to know how to get involved as an organizer, this is the seminar for you. We'll give you the ins and outs of the Wizards Play Network (our official organizer support program), how to schedule events, and tips on organizing public tournaments and games for Magic and D&D. And if you're already an organizer and have questions, ask away during our Q&A portion of the seminar! **Thu 6 PM**

Save My Game: Presented by D&D Insider

The popular *Dragon* magazine column comes to life as members of Wizard's R&D team take questions from the audience to fulfill their sacred mission—they will save your D&D game, or this seminar is free! **Fri 10 AM**

D&D 4th Edition Extravaganza

Join members of Wizards' R&D team to get a preview of upcoming D&D products, a behind-the-scenes look at *D&D Insider*, and to participate in a no-holds-barred question-and-answer session where freelancing tips, game tricks, and amazing secrets will be revealed. See how everything works better together for D&D! **Fri noon**

Spin a Yarn with Ed Greenwood

Join the creator of the Forgotten Realms setting, Ed Greenwood, for a rollicking group storytelling experi-

ence that's always memorable and highly amusing. **Fri 2 PM**

The D&D World of the Forgotten Realms

Join members of Wizard's R&D team, *D&D Insider*, and novel authors to discuss the latest happenings in the *Forgotten Realms* campaign setting and *Living Forgotten Realms*. Secrets and upcoming events will be revealed! **Fri 4 PM**

Dragonlance® 25th Anniversary

Join Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the *Dragonlance* saga. From the origin of the setting and the first novels to the just-released *Dragons of the Hourglass Mage*, it's a great year to be a *Dragonlance* fan! **Fri 6 PM**

I Want to be a D&D Dungeon Master!

Join members of Wizard's R&D team in an open question-and-answer workshop on how to take that step from player to Dungeon Master for a 4th Edition Dungeons & Dragons campaign. **Sat 10 AM**

D&D 4th Edition Extravaganza

Join members of Wizard's R&D team to get a preview of upcoming D&D products, a behind-the-scenes look at *D&D Insider*, and to participate in a no-holds-barred question-and-answer session where freelancing tips, game tricks, and amazing secrets will be revealed. See how everything works better together for D&D! **Sat 12 PM**

Adventure Builder's Workshop

Join members of Wizard's R&D team to learn how to best craft encounters to create rousing adventures for your D&D game. From skill challenges to traps and hazards, monster selection to terrain, and more, we'll dig into what makes a good encounter and a great adventure in this hands-on workshop. **Sat 2 PM**

High-Level D&D

Join members of Wizard's R&D team to discuss the intricacies of high-level D&D play, from paragon tier to epic tier, and maybe even a peek into what might be beyond 30th level for your campaign. This open discussion and Q&A covers all aspects of high-level play, including paragon paths, epic destinies, monsters, campaign direction, and more. **Sat 4 PM**

D&D Character Builder/ Compendium Update

Tomorrow, the D&D Character Builder and D&D Compendium updates go live. This is the first update since we announced our new schedule of releasing on the first Tuesday of the month instead of at the end of the month. It features data from the newest published sources, including *Monster Manual 2*, *Dragon* #374, *Dungeon* #165, the monk player character class, and *Monster Manual®: Dangerous Delves* miniatures. We've added new features to help you better organize your character in folders. We've replaced the old sample characters with classic heroes such as Drizzt Do'Urden, Raistlin, and Jim Darkmagic (of the New Hampshire Darkmagics). The tech team has also made improvements to the character sheet viewer, such as allowing you to resize class features and feats and enhanced notes capability (including printing), as well as miscellaneous fixes and updates to overall performance.

Wow. I think that's enough for this month (though I barely made a dent in all these notes and memos on my desk.) Next time, expect more of the same, as well as a new sneak peek at something you haven't seen yet. Until then,

Keep on playing!

In Case You Don't Know Him

Bill Slavicsek's gaming life was forever changed when he discovered Dungeons & Dragons in 1976. He became a gaming professional in 1986 when he was hired by West End Games as an editor. He quickly added developer, designer, and creative manager to his resume, and his work helped shape the *Paranoia*, *Ghostbusters*, *Star Wars*, and *Torg* roleplaying games. He even found some time during that period to do freelance work for D&D 1st Edition. In 1993, Bill joined the staff of TSR, Inc. as a designer/editor. He worked on a bunch of 2nd Edition material, including products for Core D&D, *Dark Sun*, *Ravenloft*, and *Planescape*. In 1997, he was part of the TSR crowd that moved to Seattle to join Wizards of the Coast, and in that year he was promoted to R&D Director for D&D. In that position, Bill oversaw the creation of both the 3rd Edition and 4th Edition of the D&D Roleplaying Game. He was one of the driving forces behind the *D&D Insider* project, and he continues to oversee and lead the creative strategy and effort for Dungeons & Dragons.

Bill's enormous list of credits includes *Alternity*, *d20 Modern*, *d20 Star Wars*, *Pokemon Jr.*, *Eberron Campaign Setting*, the *D&D For Dummies* books, and his monthly *Ampersand* (&) column for *Dragon* Magazine.